

EASY WRITER

SCRIPTING AN AMERICAN ROAD TRIP



KOZ Moto-Journalist



Acting Outlaw Tricia Helfer



Acting Outlaw Katee Sackhoff



Heath Cofran

CAST OF CHARACTERS

I've written a lot of stories in my time; everything from movie scripts, TV screenplays to song lyrics. As a Moto-Journalist I've traveled Hong Kong to Hollywood filling pages with photos and prose. Usually struggling with traditional writing conventions, I have no plot, no theme, no storyline; just an endless ribbon of road that unfolds before me. Yeah, we're going to follow the basic route Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper did in the classic 1969 biker flick, Easy Rider. Sure, we're meeting up with actress/motorcyclists Katee Sackhoff and Tricia Helfer on their charity ride from Los Angeles to Louisiana in support of the Gulf Restoration Network. But Easy Rider wasn't scripted; they made it up as they went along and this story too, will write itself. 2200 miles, 5 days, 2 guys with 1 agenda: to ride long and hard. To quote Captain America, "Yeah, I'm hip about time but I just gotta go".



GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNING

In the movie Easy Rider, Phil Spector was the "Connection" but alas he is currently in jail. We depart L.A. with tanks full of cash, I mean gas. We're anxious with anticipation of the approaching adventure (Alliteration: sorry, just can't help myself) and ride east to the high desert. We journey through a very different nation than Captain America and Billy traversed in 1969. Wearing American flags sewn to

jackets, painted on gas tanks or helmets is applauded and boldly displaying the international symbol of freedom signifies your allegiance. The general public of their era scorned longhaired hippies donning the red white and blue, that was seen as an act of defiance. My riding compadre is Heath Cofran, Media Communications at Alpinestars, 2013 Thruxton Cup Winner and all around scoundrel. The red white and blue paint job on his Triumph Bonneville pays homage to his American hero, Evel Knievel.

We shed our city skins as the landscape yawns open wide to big sky and barren desert. Catching Hwy 62 north towards Joshua Tree we pass the giant wind farms, iconic symbols of America's pursuit for self-reliance from foreign Oil. The first town we encounter is Yucca Valley, home of the Route 62 Diner. With a 50s décor, each booth has a Seeburg 100 jukebox selector, they serve breakfast all day. We had "The Road Kill" and the "Panhead" for breakfast. Behind the diner is Hutchins vintage motorcycle museum.

To Heath's astonishment, there sat one of the bikes Evel Knievel rode in his movie *Viva Kinevel*, what a great start to our story.



Heath in a state of awe

Back on Hwy 62 we stop at the Joshua Tree Inn. It's where Gram Parson (The Byrds music group) died in 1973. Room 8 is supposedly haunted and they tout its "Home of Gram Parsons Spirit". A really bizarre true story made into a movie called *Grand Theft Parsons* starring Johnny Knoxville that's well worth the watch. The site of Parsons desert cremation was marked by a small concrete slab which has since been removed by the U.S. National Park Service and relocated to the Joshua Tree Inn.



Graham Parsons

Amboy Road to historic Roy's Motel Café is without a doubt a stop on every Easy Riders road trip. Built in 1938, it served as a desert oasis to travelers on this desolate section of Route 66. Roy's vision of a travelers' Mecca was dashed when the 15 freeway was built virtually bypassing the old Rt. 66. Over the years this gas station, motel and cafe served many thousands and still offers food and gas today (albeit at almost \$4.00 a gallon). This would have been a definite gas stop for Fonda and Hopper since their Harley Sportster peanut tanks only held 2.5 gallons of gas. Heath can sympathize; his Triumph Bonneville only holds 4.3 gallons as opposed to my Victory Crossroad's 5.8 gallon capacity, allowing me an easy 200 miles between fill-ups.

Empty rooms at Roy's



The Hotel Check-in counter hasn't changed

LOOKING FOR ADVENTURE IN WHATEVER COMES OUR WAY

This has been a fun 220 miles but the ride has just begun. It's another 377 miles to our first night's stay: the Americana Inn in Flagstaff. This is where cast and crew stayed while filming Easy Rider in Arizona. We connect to Interstate 40 (Route 66 from 1966 to 1974) and cross the Colorado River at state line where you'll see the bridges in the beginning credits of the movie. I hit play on my iPod cued to "Born to be Wild" by Steppenwolf and officially am reliving the movie's opening credits. We ride 1-40 to Kingman, get off the freeway and follow the signs to enjoy the longest uninterrupted stretch of Route 66 that still remains today.

Williams Arizona was the last town bypassed by interstate 40 and has a very retro vibe. Stop in and party like its 1969. Unlike those hardtail choppers Captain America and Billy were riding my 2011 Victory Cross Roads is at ease traveling hundreds of miles through this arid terrain. The sheer number of possible leg positions of cleverly designed engine guards and floorboards make this motorcycle a joy to ride. The all-new Helical-cut gears reduce whine in fourth and sixth gears of an amazingly quiet six-speed constant mesh transmission. The Victory Cross Roads seems completely at home on such an epic journey.

The Americana Inn on Rt 66 in Flagstaff Arizona is where the actors and film crew stayed while shooting here and true to our mission, we booked a room for the night. Refraining from slanderous remarks or expletives I will reprint a few reviews posted on Trip Advisor by prior patrons.

"Sleeping in your car is a better idea"
"The absolute worst hotel experience one could have"
"The America Inn should be shut down"
"Well... it's cheap"

GONNA MAKE IT HAPPEN; TAKE THE WORLD IN A LOVE EMBRACE

The next morning it's breakfast with Katee Sackhoff (Longmire, Battlestar Galactica, 24,) and Tricia Helfer (Falling Skies, Killer Women, Battlestar Galactica). They met on set and found a common bond motorcycling. Katee, from Seattle, and Tricia, born and raised on a farm in Canada, are both wild spirits; strong willed and adventurous women. Both own Harley's back home and truly love to ride.

They formed the Acting Outlaws.org and this 2500-mile trek was in support of the Gulf Restoration Network. GRN is the only environmental advocacy group exclusively focused on the health of the Gulf of Mexico. Their ride into Flagstaff was fraught with fierce wind and rain. The weather hasn't been kind to these women. I know because I was there. Katee and Tricia's mission is to raise awareness and support for the future of the Gulf, ensuring coastal communities have the resources they need and making sure we learn the lessons of the BP drilling disaster to keep this from happening again. Their motto is *Do Something*.

Our mission is not quite as noble. Heath and I are here to find some film locations used in the Easy Rider movie. Seeing the ladies off, I reflect on the spirit of an American road trip. A nation of immigrants, we all have different histories and different destinations but our desire is the same: freedom. And as riders, whether be it on Japanese sport bikes, American V-Twins, British or German motorcycles we're all spinning in the same direction full throttle, together on this cosmic blue ball (Analogy: *a similarity between like features of two things, on which a comparison may be based.*)

Only 10 miles out of Flagstaff is Bellemont. Pull into Grand Canyon Harley for some free coffee and across the parking lot is the Roadhouse Bar and Grille. Hanging in the entry is the original *No Vacancy* Sign used in the first location shot. Only a quarter mile up the road is the Pine Breeze Inn where Billy and Wyatt we're denied a room their first night.



"Hey man, ya got a room?"

The Pine Breeze Inn Today - still no rooms available

In "The Making of Easy Rider" Peter Fonda talks of hitting the bar after a long hot day of shooting. He ordered a cold beer but is arms we're so stiff from wrestling ape hangers on a hard tail all day that he couldn't even lift the beer to his mouth. He also revealed that he missed out on frolicking around the pool one day because he'd soaked his new leathers in the bathtub to give them a more weathered look and to his embarrassment, his legs turned purple from the dye.

We double back and head East on 1-40 towards Flagstaff then north on Hwy 89. I swear to God there is a hitchhiker on the road and if I didn't have luggage I would have picked his ass up. You will see Sacred Mountain on your left and at this is the point in the movie Captain America and Billy gas up here and their hitchhiker pays the tab.



Sacred Mountain 1969



This former gas station is now someone's historic abode

Continue north and you will see the sign for Waputki National Monument. This is where they camp on day one of the film. Unfortunately, camping at Waputki National Monument, starting a fire or climbing on ruins today is completely out of the question unless you actually do want to spend the night in jail.



Wupatki National Monument

HEAVY METAL THUNDER



The looming darkness ahead hides nature's fury

We catch up Acting Outlaws Katee and Tricia on Hwy 160 and then take Hwy 64 into New Mexico. Ship Rock comes into view and its one of the most awe inspiring surreal visions of our journey. Unfortunately, the awe of Mother Nature unleashes another ferocious downpour and this time she tosses in hail. The girls have bike-to-bike communication and in the midst of the chaos, Tricia wonders if they should stop. “Stop where?” Katee barks, “were in the middle of frakin nowhere...just keep moving”. I’m very impressed at Katee and Tricia’s fortitude in the face of nature’s fury. We all hit Farmington New Mexico and have a stiff drink. At this point in the storyline, we’re all fully committed to our missions.



ShipRock



Looming Storm ahead

The next morning we leave for Santa Fe and forty miles out of Cuba NM, Heath’s Triumph Bonneville dies and he sputters to the side of the road. The bike won’t start; this is the end of our road trip and end of the story. Katee and Tricia are a hundred miles ahead of us and we’re in the middle of nowhere on Sunday. Heath summons his inner mechanic, pulling every wire, cleaning every contact, plug and connection Heaths mumbling sounds suspiciously like prayer. The Bonney roars to life, we genuflect, shout a few Hail Mary’s and depart. Strangely enough this really isn’t that far from where Captain America and Billy broke down in the film. It’s a great scene where they pull into a farm to fix their bike and two farmers are shoeing a horse. Hopper,

who directed the film, wanted the shot of these men from completely different eras juxtaposed. One man shoes his horse while another changes his tire. Generations apart yet both are caring for their beloved symbol of freedom exemplifying a common bond. (Metaphor: *A figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something important in common.*)



No cars, no AAA, no cell service... just prayers to the motorcycling gods

The 40 takes us past Santa Fe into Las Vegas New Mexico, the location of the exterior jail shot. Las Vegas NM harkens back to the 1920’s and on Sunday it’s literally a ghost town and feels like a Hollywood movie set. This is where Captain America and Billy were arrested for Parading without a license and where the exterior jail scene was shot. This is also the spot where Jack Nicholson (George) took his first drink of the day as well. Nicholson’s comedic “Nik Nik Nik Fuf Fuf Fuf” routine came from the film crew member who maintained the motorcycles. The crew member would imitate the sound of the bikes as he kicked started them. Kick, Kick, Kick Fire! (Onomatopoeia- *the formation or use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to.*)



The Jail from the Easy Rider movie in Las Vegas NM Today

100 miles north is Taos New Mexico where the swimming scenes at the hippie commune locations were filmed. Stagecoach (Manby) Hot Springs north of Taos has three shallow sand-bottomed rock pools on the east bank of the Rio Grande with temperatures usually about 97 F. Dennis Hopper ended up living in Taos for 15 years and it’s the burial place of D. H Lawrence. A must for the hard core easy rider but after three days of bad weather and

bad hotels we actually have a nice hotel waiting back in Santa Fe. The Best Western has an indoor pool, Jacuzzi, great rooms and killer complimentary breakfast. The Best Western Hotel chain offers every Captain America a 10% discount just by joining their free Rider Rewards Program and are very biker friendly. Most of us are regular workin’ stiffs and our adventures are well planned and prepared and that’s Ok because Captain America and Billy were chasing the American dream...we get to live it.



Welcome relief... a Margarita and nachos please

FIRE ALL OF THE GUNS AT ONCE AND EXPLODE INTO SPACE.



Preparing for another day of wrestling Mother Nature.

It’s our last day riding with Katee and Tricia and we all face 40 to 50 mph wind gusts. Quite honestly my windscreen is flexing as if rubber and the girls look like biker bobble heads. The Big Rigs are devouring three-foot tumbleweeds in Pac-Man-like pursuit leaving us in a wake of shards. After several hours of this brutal beating the girls removed the motorcycle trunks reducing their footprint and kept forging on. Believe me, the last four days have been no picnic looking at the pretty flowers, we’ve all been getting our asses kicked and I truly commend these two women riders. Heath and I head toward the mountains for relief while the girls head south; they have another five days of riding through Texas to New Orleans. We Easy Riders have to get back to Los Angeles and besides, everyone knows how this story ends for Captain America and Billy.

EPILOGUE

The song remains the same; the plot’s unchanged and we’re all players in the game. Whether its Hollywood actors like Fonda and Hopper with roles in Easy Rider, Acting Outlaws Katee and Tricia actually riding 2500 miles for a charity, or just average Americans spending their hard earned money touring this wondrous country, Easy Rider captured a spirit, one that still inspires us today. Ultimately we’re each writers of our own script defining the story of our lives and as motorcycle riders it’s not our nature to watch the passing parade. We live the adventure, demand a starring role and yes... we actually *do* ride off in to the sunset.

BACK IN THE SADDLE AT SWEETWATER HARLEY-DAVIDSON



STORY & PHOTOS BY RANDY TWELLS

On Thursday evening, September 3rd the new 2016 Harley-Davidson Motorcycles were unveiled at a special VIP party at Sweetwater H-D in National City, California so, I was honored to be included. Sweetwater H-D is back in the saddle and inviting everyone to come along for the ride. Their policy is, the customer is #1.

Now of course to start off with, I’m hungry, so I shot a few photos to make sure I had some non-food-covered-lens shots, THEN I headed for the salt & pepper garlic chicken wings, they were awesome. I had to ask where from? Golden Mandarin in next door Chula Vista, Sweetwater’s prior back yard, so they ‘know’ where to find the good stuff. Nachos and ice cold beer, soda & bottled water plus gourmet cookies and coffee, rounded out the menu. It was a home run already!

But of course the main focus was the 2016 models there to check out- Andy the General Sales Mgr. and Sales Associate Louis, gave a nice presentation with an overview of the new models. Taking questions from the crowd gathered, they homed in on new features and the latest technology on the 2016’s.

In general though, this was a chance to bring people together. Sweetwater H-D claims the #1 spot for Military sales in San Diego County— accompanied by their policy of whenever possible, hiring former Military men and women. Also being the first H-D dealer on the West Coast to have an in house tattoo studio, was a no brainer they were on top of, very popular with our military members.

Everyone who came to the party got a free raffle ticket, and they gave away some good stuff. Various accessory items and also a wash/detail kit, plus \$25 gift cards to



Ruby’s Diner! Jason Wilhite, self described as Marketing Director & Janitor ha ha, tried to stay out of the spotlight but at 6’like 25”, he’s hard to miss. Sweetwater Girls Lisa & Gina served as hostesses for the evening, helping with prizes and bike modeling (thank you) among other duties. Ralph in Parts gave us a tour of what’s new there.

Then Paul the HOG Chapter Director rounded up the new members and we all welcomed them into the warm Sweetwater HOG riding family right there. The HOG Officers were introduced too and Mike the HOG Chapter photographer shot photos. This HOG Chapter is very much a part of dealership events and activities and a very friendly chapter I can testify to myself. At its prior location in Chula Vista, this HOG Chapter, the first in California, was started almost 30 years ago and it’s still going strong here at Sweetwater.

General Manager Anastasia was there to represent for herself and Marianna Polles. This Mother-Daughter team is the riding force- and is hands on as the embodiment of the mission, Back in the Saddle and the Customer is #1. Sweetwater H-D’s original Dead Bird run is January 1st New Year’s Day 2016, and meantime check the Quick Throttle Calendar for more Sweetwater H-D events!

--See more photos at www.quickthrottle.com in the Gallery!

