

2006 DEALER EXPO SHOW DIRECTORY

Vol. 42, No. 2 February 2006

Dealernews



THE VOICE OF POWERSPORT RETAILERS

MIC'S CREDIT CARD SYSTEM: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WARNING: NOISE CAN KILL AN INDUSTRY



ALIEN NATION

E-Ton adds spice to Champion's traditional lineup

DEALER EXPO SHOW DIRECTORY
Exhibitor Lists
Schedule of Events
Floor Map

An ADVANTAGE Publication



'Excessive Noise Can End Motorcycling'

Shot-callers say it's time to quiet things down — or else

by Dennis Johnson

In acoustic circles, sound is a physical phenomenon that can be felt and measured. Noise, on the other hand, is simply defined as an unwanted sound.

In the powersports world, sound is the throaty lode of a heaving V-twin or the guttural thump of a big single. Noise is what nonmotorcyclists complain about when they try to shut down a track or urge a crackdown on weekend cruisers.

It's the noise that you, as a dealer, should be worried about.

For many industry insiders, legislative wonks and long-time riders, these complaints sound an awful lot like the possible death knell of the industry. From off-road to city streets there are those who are increasingly using the bike's sweet song as a weapon in their defense of nature and peace of mind — and lawmakers are listening.

Early in December 2005, representatives from the American Motorcyclist Association, BlueRibbon Coalition, Off-Road Business Association, Motorcycle Industry Council, a handful of exhaust manufacturers, the motorcycling press and other interested parties gathered in Corona, Calif., to discuss the future of sound in the powersports industry. While focusing mainly on the impact to off-road riding, the group agreed that the problem affects every level of the business.

The general consensus? The industry as a whole must act together to phase out loud pipes; otherwise, the government is going to do it and it won't be pretty. In fact, loud exhaust complaints are being used against MX tracks across the country, public lands in the Pacific Northwest and, most notably, private property in Riverside, Calif.

Loud Is Out

"Excessive noise can end motorcycling," says Dal Smilie, vice chairman of the AMA board of directors. "When a motorcycle makes sound and it pisses off a legislator,

regulator or neighbor, it doesn't much matter whether it's a road bike or an off-road bike."

While the noise problem has been around since the 1970s, Smilie says the issue really has legs this time. It's up to everybody in the industry to put the squeeze on each other, from riders pressuring fellow riders to run quieter pipes, to consumers asking their shops to stop selling loud pipes, and to everyone cajoling pipe makers and OEMs to quiet things down.

The first step is to kill the age-old notion that loud pipes automatically mean more power, especially for dirtbikes. The myth carries down from the Supercross arena to the local AMA district amateur races. The informal panel agreed that it's imperative to get this message out to the younger riders.

Youth Appeal

Enter Jeremy McGrath, who has been recruited as a spokesman for the campaign because of his intimate involvement in the fight. McGrath's much publicized battle against neighbors near his Riverside County property began with complaints about noise coming from his personal track and nearly ended with the county outlawing riding on one's own private property.

Like many people his age, McGrath, 35, says he hadn't taken any interest in the sound battle — until it affected him. Now well-versed in the legalese of noise laws, bureaucracy and the power of the civic complaint, he wants to send the message to young riders that loud pipes are not only uncool, but unnecessary.

As a professional racer and all-time great, McGrath says he knows that switching to a quieter exhaust has little effect on performance. This coming from one of the few racers who can ride a high-performance motocross bike to its true capability.

Besides appealing to young riders, McGrath says ➡

'Excessive Noise Can End Motorcycling'

he believes he can influence other professional racers to get involved in the fight. And with a little big-name power, they can get the aftermarket pipe builders to launch a campaign with a star rider using quieter pipes. Once he shows he can still win, the message will be clear.

Apparently the AMA feels the same.

Effective for the 2007 Supercross/Motocross season, the maximum sound level will be reduced to 99dB, down from 102dB. The reduced decibel level is already in effect for amateur Motocross and is at 96dB for all AMA nonclosed-course events.

Leading the charge in enforcing the 96dB rule is AMA District 36 in Northern

California. The local branch has been aggressively enforcing compliance with the sound level at all of its races, and while things were a little slow-moving at first, there is now 100 percent compliance.

"If you don't pass, you don't race," says Dave Pickett, president and legislative action officer for Dist. 36. "It's been one of the most positive things we have done, and it keeps the 'greens' off our butts. Our youth program has exploded, and for the long term we're teaching our youngsters, starting with the Pee Wee program, that quiet is cool."

The district embraced the quieter sound levels when the state lowered the threshold in 2003. The idea, Pickett says, was to take control of the issue so that environmental groups could no longer wield it as a reason to close riding areas. The decision also laid the groundwork for a nationwide change for AMA nationals and pro racing.

Growing a Market

Pickett says the change wouldn't be enough to persuade manufacturers to build quality, quiet products for only one state. However, if the AMA adopted the rule there would be an entire customer base for the quiet pipes.

If pro racers affect the public demand, then pipe builders will make the products that the dealerships can then sell to the public demanding them. Getting to that point that could be a challenge.

While such companies as FMF, Big Gun, White Brothers and others make quiet pipes, they're more the exception than the rule. As with many business decisions, there's the question as to who is going to take the leap first into an undeveloped market.

FMF's head of research and development, George Luttig, says that it's tough to get customers to buy quiet pipes.

Luttig says there will always be cowboys out there who won't comply, but these shady operators can't control what the rest of the industry does or it will never progress.

It appears that this is what it will come down to. Daphne Greene, deputy director for the California State Park's OHV division, bluntly told the assembled group in Corona that they all needed to take ownership of the problem.

In terms of organization and fund-raising the industry is light-years behind the ➔

Once Again, TJ Power Sports is
Revolutionizing the Go-Kart Industry.
Our Karts **Never** Sounded
This Good Cruising at **48 MPH**



Hammerhead Super Sport

2006 New Features:

- Digital Speedometer
- Rear Two Way Speakers
- 48 MPH Top Speed

TJ Power Sports
TEL: 877-857-7678 tjpowersports.com



CIRCLE 35 ON READER SERVICE CARD OR VISIT DEALERNEWS.COM

'Excessive Noise Can End Motorcycling'

environmental groups, she says. This despite the fact that Green Sticker registration in California alone has increased over the past five years by 83 percent for motorcycles and 87 percent for ATVs.

"Sound knows no boundaries," Greene says.

Dirt Rider magazine has joined the list of

aftermarket pipe builders, McGrath, the AMA and other industry shot-callers in saying it's time to quiet down. Editor Jimmy Lewis has set a new editorial policy on exhaust shootouts using a 99dB limit at the MIC's recommended test rpm. Any motocross pipe over this mark will fail.

Additionally, *Dirt Rider's* motorcycle tests

and project bikes must also meet this sound level. For off-road bikes and pipes, the magazine will use a 96dB level.

An article in the January issue details the new guidelines, with Lewis writing about the mostly false belief that loud pipes equal more power. "It is a myth that all loud pipes make great power. The reality is that great pipes make good power."

He quotes McGrath as saying, "I can't ride a 450 to its full potential with the stock muffler, or even a long (or quiet) muffler on. A long muffler still makes plenty of power for me."

Retailers, Take the Lead

Finally, it comes down to dealers, who sit on the front line of the debate.

A report published by the AMA and other interested parties called "Sound Advice," called for dealers to educate their employees and customers about sound laws and the potentially negative effect of un baffled exhaust systems. They should also discourage the use of loud pipes and noncompliant exhaust systems. Additionally, information about the laws governing exhaust systems should be posted in plain sight for all employees.

Sound guru Chris Real says it's critical for dealers to sell and promote quieter exhaust systems for off- and on-road use.

"We have to be realistic enough to say that we do have a privilege in riding. We shouldn't deliberately antagonize the neighbors," says Real, CEO of DPS Inc.-Chemhelp. Real is the sound technician who tests Honda's factory bikes and has trained hundreds of people on how to check a bike's sound levels. He also performs the sound tests for *Dirt Rider* and other magazines.

"We need to be aware that if we don't police ourselves, the government, whether it be federal or regional will decide the limit," Real says. "Then we have a very, very big problem that'll pretty much kill the [pipe] aftermarket and possibly restrict a class of vehicles, motorcycles, at certain times and on certain routes just like they do with large trucks and commercial vehicles. I hate to see our industry suffer."

For information on Real's sound training program, call (909) 981-5228. 



Technical Data and Labor Guide on CD

Over 100 lines of Service & Repair data per model including:

- Valve clearances
- Compression and oil pressures
- Jet sizes
- Fuel levels
- Pilot screw openings
- Ignition and spark plug data
- Firing orders and cylinder layouts
- Essential tightening torques
- Fork oil capacities and seal sizes
- Tire sizes and pressures
- Lubricants and capacities

PLUS Labor Guide

- Over 400 inclusive Manufacturers' warranty times per model
- Times can be adjusted to your own requirements
- Calculate and print your own estimates

Motorcycle CD Annual Subscription \$129.00

Includes updates in winter and summer, to keep your information up-to-date.

Product No CDA-140US

Motorcycles and ATV's 1989-2006
Researched from Motorcycle Manufacturers' information.

Available from **Mobile Tool and Motorcycle Trade Distributors** or direct from the publishers

Autodata Publications Inc.
 Tel: (800) 305-0338
 www.autodatapubs.com
 E-mail sales@autodatapubs.com



1889v1_2212005

CIRCLE 37 ON READER SERVICE CARD  OR VISIT DEALERNEWS.COM