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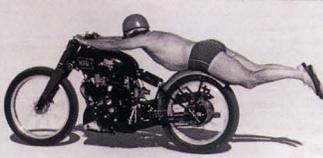
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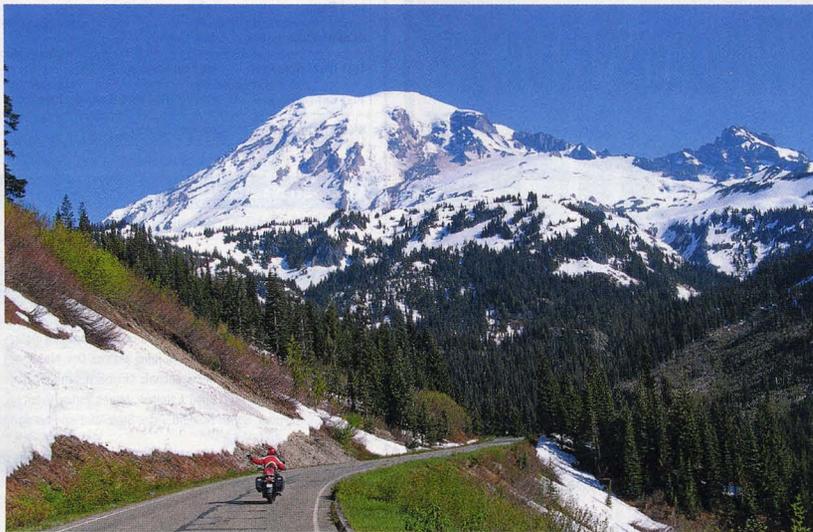


CAT TALES

Brian Catterson

PHOTOS: Brian Catterson

WORKIN' THEM ANGLES



Portrait of a man taking the long way to work: Rush drummer/lyricist Neil Peart has an enviable commute, here visiting Mount Rainier between show dates.

Way back in 1997, my sister Laurie e-mailed me one of those questionnaires that later became popular on Myspace. I dutifully filled it out, sent it back to her and apparently saved it, because I found it recently while purging files on my laptop. One of the lines read: "Name a person you would like to meet." My reply: Neil Peart.

Reading that shocked me for two reasons. First, while I've been a lifelong Rush fan, I played bass and sang back in the day, so spent a lot of time channeling Geddy Lee. And while I've always admired Neil's drumming, I've honestly been more impressed with his lyrics. So it must have been something that he wrote that made me want to meet him.

Second was the fact that not only did I eventually meet Neil, we became fast friends.

What I didn't know at the time was that Neil had just begun riding motorcycles. And then tragically lost his daughter in a car crash and his wife to cancer, both in the span of one year.

Reeling from depression, he went for a ride (see *The Bike That Changed My Life*, page 19). When he returned 18 months later, he wrote a book called *Ghost Rider*. I asked the publisher for a review copy, and a few weeks later found myself riding with Neil and the band's security manager Michael Mosbach (now another good friend) for a story that appeared in that "other" major U.S. motorcycle magazine.

Celebrity company aside, that adventure proved memorable as we were the last vehicles to head up a dirt mountain road in front of the paving trucks, got lost in the desert and followed a school bus (!) back to civilization. And that was just the first of many: Whenever Rush is on tour, I get a call from Michael asking, "When are you coming riding with us?"

Last summer I got the call again, and found myself jetting to Vancouver, British Columbia, to ride with "the girls" down to the Gorge—Washington State's answer to Colorado's Red Rocks. Neil collects stamps from National Parks, so I wasn't the least bit surprised when he led us way out of the way to Mount Rainier. What *did* surprise me was that, after spying the 14,411-foot peak looming on the horizon most of the day, we arrived at the mountaintop lodge to discover the peak still rose another 5000 feet!

Of course we took some dirt roads on our BMW GSs, turning around on one because it was snowed under—in July! Last time out,

in Colorado, we got caught in a blizzard on a summer's day. Must be a Canadian thing...

Following Neil down the twisty road leaving Mount Rainier, I noticed that he was using less of the road than he had in years past. Initially, I attributed this to the fact that he had become a father again (daughter Olivia is now 2), but I later learned that he had low-sided in gravel on the previous tour. Not this time!

The song "Workin' Them Angels" is about risk-taking. Based on an exchange Neil overheard at the side of the road—"You were *workin' them angels*," the wife told her hard-driving husband—the lyrics go: *All my life, I've been workin' them angels overtime, Riding and driving and living, So close to the edge*. Now, Neil was literally riding *farther* from the edge. Can't blame him for that!

After two days on the road we arrived at the Gorge for the final concert of Rush's *Time Machine* tour, where the band performed what must rank as one of their best shows ever. When I told Neil that afterwards, he invoked a hockey reference: "You've gotta leave it all on the ice."

Neil has often written that he likes to see his fans "delighted." They certainly were that night—and none more so than me.

But I've still got to admit: If I had *known* that I would one day meet the person I named in that questionnaire my sister sent me, I would have written Pamela Anderson! **MC**

THE BIKE THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

2006 BMW R1100GS

PHOTO: Michael Mosbach



- RIDER:** Neil Peart
THEN: Grieving widower contemplating life without music
NOW: Remarried husband and new father, still rocking with Rush

The first motorcycle I bought for myself carried me into the wonderful world of adventure touring. (Though my first bike, a 2004 R1100RS sport-tourer, had suffered manfully—if unsuitably—through trips above the Arctic Circle and around Mexico.) Those two bikes came out on the first concert tour on which I traveled by motorcycle, *Test for Echo*, in 1996-'97.

"In '98, this bike also carried me out of the utter darkness left by double family losses, on a 55,000-mile ride to the farthest points of North America, from Alaska to Belize. Thus it was the 'star' of the book *Ghost Rider*, about my journey through grief and sorrow to gradual healing.

"Retired after 100,000 miles, it was displayed for a time at the AMA Museum in Ohio, and now stands on display in the hallway of my home in Quebec. It was also the first of seven GSs (I call them "Geezers," and number them to keep them apart), most of which have been sold to friends. My present ride is a 2010 R1200GS: 'Geezer 7.'"



PHOTO: Alexander Zvojinovich

How We Roll

When Rush drummer/lyricist Neil Peart invited Editor Catterson to ride with him from Vancouver, Canada, to Seattle, Washington, on last summer's *Time Machine* tour, Cat went ahead and booked round-trip airline tickets. But surprise, surprise: Seeing as how the latter show was the last of the tour, Neil invited Cat to fly home with him and the band's security manager Michael Mosbach (seen here doing "Blue Steel") on a private jet! That was pretty special even for Neil, since he usually rides his BMW R1200GS from show to show while his bandmates fly.