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Bike books

Here's the latest batch that's slipped through the letterbox, reviewed by the Bear

Twist that throttle, Aussies

The must-buy book out of this lot is one I don't even have a photo for. In fact, I don't even have a copy of it, and the original review I wrote seems to have disappeared when a previously trustworthy USB drive gave up the ghost. I don't have a copy because the ba- ... the *friend* I lent it to claims he returned it. I suspect he's keeping it because it's so funny.

Here's the beginning of the publisher's bumf for it, and it's even right! "*Twisting Throttle Australia* is the laugh-out-loud, first-hand account of an ordinary Kiwi guy who made the odd decision to ride a motorcycle some 17,000km around the outside of Australia with not much money, an iPod loaded with 492 songs he came to detest and high cholesterol."

Mike Hyde has the dry Kiwi humour down pat (occasionally just a little too pat) and makes things the rest of us would consider fairly ordinary — such as replacing a bike chain — hilarious. He's a worthy successor to Barry Crump, and if you don't know who Barry Crump is, find a copy of *A Good Keen Man* and get ready to laugh a lot.

Anyway, Mike's stuff reads well and in one way he's even better than Bill Bryson — he doesn't let us Aussies get away with quite so much. A terrific insight into an ageing Kiwi mind and the impact that Australia's vast spaces and vastly specious Australians have on it. You don't have to be either a motorcyclist or a Kiwi to enjoy this book.

Twisting Throttle Australia

Mike Hyde

Harper Collins New Zealand, paperback

\$36.99 plus \$6.95 postage

Available from Mike's website

www.twistingthrottle.com

Travels with Sam

Sam Manicom is an easy bloke to like. He comes across as unpretentious and gentle, and even perhaps a little unworldly, in these books. Both *Into Africa* and *Under Asian Skies* describe pretty amazing adventurous motorcycle trips, though they're often so low key you have to

remind yourself that at times he's just an inch away from being killed.

It's a British thing, I suppose.

If you've ever wondered even just a little bit what adventure touring is all about, Sam's books will give you a pretty good idea. They're also a bit out of the usual mould and fun — you never know what disaster awaits him around the next corner, to be treated with a stiff upper lip and equanimity.

Into Africa

Under Asian Skies

Sam Manicom

Self published, paperbacks available from www.sam-manicom.com

Oh, Jay

The *Biker's Handbook* is a bit of a conundrum. I honestly didn't know whether to laugh or pop a vein for much of this book. It claims to be a guide to "Becoming Part of the Motorcycle Culture", which is something they have in America, apparently. It tells you how to build a custom bike and become, well, part of the motorcycle culture, I suppose, by buying only American bikes and American clothing.

Jay explains: "Why? Two reasons: One, it's going to be heavy-gauge leather and have good zippers on it; and two, because it's made in America. See the trend here?"

Yes, thank you Jay. We do. Oh, and is this a YKK zipper, dammit?

There is some good advice in this book, especially in regard to "club" members. A club, which you must apparently never call a gang, appears to be what we call a patch club, and Barbieri suggests that when you find yourself around some members you "do not act differently. Do not be an

asshole. Do not approach them. Just do nothing" — always assuming you're not naturally an asshole.

That's pretty much correct, but it's caught up in a lot of advice about how to ship your bike to rallies (yep) and how to rent a house there (uh huh) as well as boasting about goings-on in various strip joints. The book is also full of badly drawn cartoons.

Jay Barbieri is the producer of a TV show called *American Thunder*, which I've never heard of. He also has "a quick wit and a great — though twisted — sense of humour", according to the introduction. Both seem to have deserted him when he was putting this book together.

Biker's Handbook

Jay Barbieri

Motorbooks, paperback \$24.99

Available from good bookshops.

Wholesale enquiries, Capricorn Link Australia, 02 4577 1400

Really wild

This book, on the other hand, is the real deal. *The Original Wild Ones* is the story of the Boozefighters Motorcycle Club, the gang ... er, club that started the whole wild biker thing in Hollister, California,

