

## Australians are good Americans



I recently went over to Australia to attend a dealer show put on by Rollies Speed Shop, our premier Australian distributor. The Australian economy is doing very well right now thanks to their vast natural resources and a mining bonanza. This translates into a vibrant American V-Twin bike scene. Australia is actually the third largest market for Harley-Davidson; the second is Japan and of course the USA is number one.

It's about 19 hours of flying to get to Brisbane from Michigan; a five hour flight from Detroit to LAX and 14 hours from Hell-A to Brisbane. I rented a car to experience this driving on the wrong side of the road thing. Australia is a big country. It's about the same geographic size as the contiguous United States but most of the population is packed into the urban coastal areas on the east/southeast and southwest coasts. Australia has 22 million people, which makes the population about 7% the size of the United States, which has 312 million.

But Australians are absolutely fanatical about cars, bikes, and machines. The number of motorheads/gearheads per capita seems like it's three times that of America; they love their internal combustion machines. They drag race and track race cars and bikes like a mo-fo. Australia is similar to America but with small dif-

ferences. As I mentioned, they drive on the wrong side of the road. Good friends call each other "mates." *Real* good friends call each other a word that begins with 'c' and rhymes with runt.

They don't rent a car; they "hire" a car. Service parts are called "spares." "Root" is used in place of the F word when describing intercourse. A crescent wrench is called a "shifter" and they don't install BAKER transmissions into bikes, they "fit" them into bikes.

I've spent a lot of time in Europe and Japan and I'm familiar with the realities of living there and making a living there. Australia is probably the closest thing to America in my travels. I was born American and I will die American but if I were to emigrate to another country, it would be Australia. They are like us and they have a similar perspective on life—and a deep hatred of China. They are proud to manufacture goods and services in Australia. But living and surviving there is much harder than in America.

Fresh water is scarce so water conservation is a real big deal. A pack of smokes are \$15. Gas costs \$6.50/gallon. A starter home is \$400,000. They have cameras to monitor speeding (and send speeding tickets via mail) everywhere in the urban areas. Sobriety check lanes are rampant all afternoon and into the evening and even in the morning. But that doesn't matter (true American attitude!) because they drink like fish and love American bourbon.

I visited a few shops including Adam Hill's Wild Card Customs. It's a very clean shop with these massive groovy murals in their show room of S&S engines and BAKER gearsets; these guys are really into it. Rollies put on a first class event that was attended by over 150 dealers from all over Australia and New Zealand. The people there really knew their stuff about new products (thanks to the internet) and old iron. And they were hungry for more. The day after the event I had the privilege of riding about 400 miles on a foot clutch bike loaned to me by Chris Anderson of Anderson's Cycle, a talented custom builder who's chomping at the bit to move to America where the market is much bigger.

I rode from the Gold Coast up to the Sunshine Coast and through the mountains to the west with a group called the American Motorcycle Club. I rode in a pack of about 200 Harley-Davidsons and many of them prominently displayed the Australian *and* American flags on their bikes. It was an honor to see that and it made me proud to be American.

So what do Australians think about Americans? They love us! They will freely say that America is really screwed up but they love our bikes, cars, music, movies, and our lifestyle. So it occurred to me that the whole American V-Twin scene goes a long way to bring us closer as two nations, rather than farther apart. I saw that first hand. They celebrate American bikes and American lifestyle over there. They dream of coming to Sturgis, which is no small feat for them, and many of them do. If only we could get Al-Qaeda to start rolling V-Twins and drinking beer they might chill out on this whole jihad thing and see it our way. **IW**

