

## Burnouts Are Like Sex

*Bert Baker  
Baker Drivetrain*

*photo by Jack McIntyre/Biker Productions*

A lot of crap comes out of my mouth at the rallies—some of it coherent and some not. During the 2009 Baker Burnout Drags held at the Buffalo Chip during Sturgis this year I was quoted: “Burnouts are like sex.” In the aftermath of shredded tires, empty bleach bottles, and chunks of rubber all over the place I was asked to explain my comment, so here we go.

Anyone lucky enough to have been in the hospital with a morphine drip and one of those clicker buttons knows the primeval bliss it delivers. You can set your hair on fire, put a pair of vise grips on your scrotum, or tattoo your arm pits and you just won't care; all you need is that damn clicker button. Endorphins have a similar chemical structure to morphine and are naturally formed within the body to be released after physical trauma...or sex. However, the check and balance of the frontal lobe prevents us from intentionally taking a 12-pound sledgehammer to a kneecap so we can enjoy a little buzz along with our morning coffee. On the other hand, there's sex.

Sex is a crude, rudimentary act that any imbecile (classic definition: IQ between 25-50) can perform. It does not require a lot of skill and there are a variety of ways to do it. That endorphin buzz enjoyed during sex rewards us and, in the final moments, someone could set your hair on fire, put vise grips on your scrotum, or tattoo your arm pits and you just would not care. Doing a burnout on an American V-Twin produces similar physiological results. It is a very crude, primitive act that requires only a basic level of skill and knowledge, but onlookers just enjoy the heck out of it; kind of like 2-wheeled porn.

The trick to any burnout is a balance of physics and theatrics. With 12 hard-working, tire-melting participants, an enthusiastic crowd, an energetic master of ceremonies and a burnout pit in the middle of the Buffalo Chip, the Baker Burnout Drags has the theatrics covered. So what about the physics?

The one major law of physics used during a burnout is the Law of Inertia, which basically states that an object in motion stays in motion. Inertia is transferred from one object to another, so if a ball is rolling and hits another ball, the second ball is going to roll forward: the inertia was transferred and it keeps going. For a good burnout you need that inertia to be in place to transfer energy from motor to primary to final drive to rear wheel, in that order. Energy is exerted (inertia) when the motor begins to spin. When the motor hits a high enough RPM it transfers its inertia to the primary. The sprocket spins the pri-



**Bert Baker with “energetic master of ceremonies” Roadside Marty.”**

mary chain, and when that hits a high enough speed, it engages the final drive, which then transfers its energy to the rear wheel. As long as there is enough energy (inertia) transferring its way through the system the rear tire will break loose from the ground. Throw a little bleach under the spinning tire and there will be smoke and chaos. Climax in the form of burnt rubber!

The Baker Burnout Drags builders have an additional challenge: shifting. The competition is set up tournament style, with the competitors squaring off in pairs, with the first to hit 5th gear moving on to the next round. During the one-on-one battles they push their bikes to the limit to spin the rear tire and to produce smoke and burned rubber, while at the same time shifting the transmission through the gears. When you shift a transmission you reduce the engine RPM in order to help increase speed, reduce motor wear and tear, and essentially move forward without the engine screaming. Maintaining enough RPM to transfer the energy required to spin the rear tire while at the same time shifting through the gears then provides a unique challenge.

The Baker Burnout Drags wouldn't be possible without the help of the good people at the Buffalo Chip, our industry partners who help sponsor the event and our industry friends who volunteer their time and risk sacrificing their bikes for the cause. Congratulations to this year's winner, Ken Wolfe from S&S Cycle, who “smoked” the competition with his 103” Shovelhead motor and Baker 6-into-4 tranny. When it's all said and done it seems a fitting way to end the long Sturgis Rally, and the result is pretty damn cool. The spirited, head-to-head competition, the struggle of rider vs. machine with the climax of smoke and burned rubber is just another way to trigger the release of endorphins in those of us with motorcycling in our souls. So there you have it, if you're looking for primeval bliss take your pick: morphine, sex or burnouts! **IW**