



## Your product here

After a long day of riding and walking around greater Sturgis and nearly glazed over from the ceaseless barrage of brand banners and commercial sponsorship of every bike show, beauty pageant, dog fight and lynching in town, I returned to the house to unwind. I peeled out of my supple FXRG jacket from MotorClothes and tossed it on the back of the Barcalounger. I zipped off my custom tailored Purple Hog Leathers chaps and tugged out of my rugged Russell Rider boots, collapsed on the Broyhill and switched on the Magnavox. The sports highlights were on ESPN and a press conference from the US Open featured Tiger Woods responding to questions while taking frequent pensive swigs off a conspicuous bottle of Gatorade. That was followed by some footage from a beach volleyball match where the players cavorted in the sand wearing nothing but Speedo swimsuits and prominent temporary tattoos for Panama Jack sun products, and then some results on the ball games out at Coors Field, Miller Park, SBC Coliseum and McAfee Park.

I started glazing over again, and began to reflect on how fundamentally advertising is changing in the media these days, as consumers become increasingly desensitized to the overt sales pitch and advertisers confront ever shorter attention spans and ever higher resistance thresholds. The electronic media has it the worst in this. Smart TV programming allows viewers to zap out the ad content, and even the average low-tech Joe has become adept at surfing away to other channels during sponsor breaks, making watching commercials optional. Satellite radio is taking a serious bite out of the airwaves, leaving advertisers completely out of the picture. And over on the Internet, they're still trying to figure out a way to work paid advertising effectively into the medium. All they've figured out for sure is nobody likes pop-ups.

So, naturally, it's advertisers in these media that are most enthusiastically embracing and practicing what's called product placement, the catchphrase for the exploding advertising tactic of paying big money to slip brand names and logos and the goods themselves into the actual entertainment content of programming. It's sneaky and it blurs the line between information and infomercial, between editorial integrity and commercial

shilling. It's also the unalterable way of the electronic future.

Compared to what those poor bastards are up against, those of us in the specialized print medium have it easy, and I can afford to get philosophical about the situation. In the case of an enthusiast journal like *THUNDER PRESS*, we write about American bikes for people who ride American bikes, and the advertisers offer products and services specifically for that readership. The ads are not only focused and informative, they're downright handy when looking for a specific accessory, or for places to ride and events to attend, and thus I can sleep well at night knowing that the lines are well-drawn; nobody's getting scammed, I get to tell the truth, and everybody benefits.

Which is not to suggest that I couldn't get by with a little less sleep. And, in truth, I've been mulling over how I can get in on the product placement boom and bank some of that sweet payola; maybe knock down a little beer money on the side, since I'm writing this column anyway, and what would be the harm in dropping a name or two real subtle-like into the mix? No harm whatsoever, is how I see it. So let me pop open a refreshing Seagram's Cooler, dab some Lamisil on my fungus, and demonstrate how this will all work.



## A sober suggestion

Terry, I have been reading your publication for almost three years now, and I notice that the only runs and events that you seem to cover are the ones where alcohol is served. I appreciate the fact that you advertise all types of events in the Calendar section free of charge. I was just wondering if it might not be possible for someone on your staff to attend a clean and sober function and be able

I would start with a basic column about, say, kicking it in the garage with one of my old-school bros, picking his brain about what he considers essential to pack along on a long bike trip, and passing that wisdom along to you, the reader. Just winging it here, and playing it straight, it might go like this:

*My buddy Buddha Joe, who's logged more miles in his day than an aging locomotive, is a horn dog of the first order who's constantly on the prowl for painted chicks in roadhouses, so he always carries a few skins in the pocket of his denims. When it comes to things mechanical, he's a bit of a worrywart, so he makes sure he packs a full complement of tools on the bike, so that no matter where he is—from California to Florida—he's prepared.*

OK. That's informative and slightly scandalous, which is what I try to achieve in this column, and now we'll try it again, only this time with some clever product placement:

*My buddy Buddha Joe, who's logged more miles than Amtrak, is a Maxim subscriber who's constantly on the prowl for chicks wearing Maybelline in Denny's, so he always carries the economical 12-pack of Trojan Extended Pleasures in his Diamond Gusset Jeans. When it comes to things mechanical, he's a bit of a candidate for Zoloft, so he makes sure he has a CruzTools pouch on the bike, so that no matter where he is—from Marine World Africa USA to Busch Gardens—he's prepared, especially since he also packs a Nokia and the American Express Card. Don't leave home without it.*

So that was pretty painless, wasn't it? And actually more entertaining than the straight telling, if you ask me. Everybody wins. And now, if you'll excuse me, I have some invoices to mail out.

*It's all right here in the Your Product Here diaries. ♦*

to see that those of us who choose a sober lifestyle have just as much fun if not more than the people who drink.

I have never seen a knock-down drag-out fight or anyone ever get arrested at one of these events, and we usually spend most of our time laughing our asses off. Not only that but the next day we remember what happened the day before. This

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