

A portrait of Michael Lichter, a man with a grey goatee and a red shirt, sitting on a motorcycle. The background is dark with a bright light source creating a lens flare effect. The motorcycle's fairing has a yellow and red pattern.

MICHAEL LICHTER

"Conductor for a Symphony of Colors on Wheels"



There are two kinds of professional photographers; the ones who “take” pictures and may succeed in getting a handful of good images out of hundreds of shots, then there are the ones who “compose” or “create” pictures with an almost 100% success rate out of a handful of shots. Michael Lichter’s 30 years of experience as a professional photographer certainly make him part of the second group.

To prove my point here is a partial list of the bike builders Michael has worked with: Arlen Ness, Bill Steele, Billy Lane, Brian Klock, Chica, Cory Ness, Dave Perewitz, David Covington, Denver’s Choppers, Donnie Smith, Eddie Trotta, Indian Larry (RIP), Hank Young, Jeff Cochran, Jerry Covington, Jesse Rooke, Kendall Johnson, Kim Suter, Mike Pugliese, Orange County Choppers and the list goes on ...

In short, if your eyes have an insatiable appetite for iron on wheels you may as well just cut to the chase, forget reading my column and log on to www.lichterphoto.com. Michael’s website will serve you a feast of images which will without a doubt fully satisfy every visual taste bud you may have.

In 1977, after a stint simultaneously playing drums in a BeBop jazz band, bussing tables in a restaurant and doing personal photography, Michael decided he was a better photographer than a drummer and hung up the sticks. It was during this time that he started riding his 1971 Harley-Davidson Shovelhead (which he still owns) and photographing bikers. This work, along with a series

on cowboys, was exhibited in group and solo exhibitions over the next few years. Prints were included in private and public collections, most notably by ARCO (Atlantic Richfield Corp.) and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, in Paris.

In 1979, Easyriders started to publish some of Michael’s motorcycle photography. He photographed a number of smaller events and features specifically for them, proving his abilities, and then was off on his third trip to Sturgis in 1981, now on assignment for Easyriders. Also in 1981, after a solo exhibition of his work at the Gallery of Photography in Dublin, Ireland, which was boycotted by the League of Decency, Michael became disillusioned with the “art world” and again changed course. He stopped publicly exhibiting his photographs in favor of publishing his motorcycle work in Easyriders and simultaneously began developing his career as a commercial advertising and corporate photographer. By 1982, his studio was open in Boulder, Colorado. It wasn’t long before he developed a clientele that included companies like IBM, Sun Microsystems and Kraft Foods.

Motorcycle and commercial assignments have taken Michael across America and abroad to Canada, Europe, Japan, Mexico and New Zealand. While he has published more than 1,000 articles on motorcycling and custom bikes, he has also photographed annual reports, product photography, advertising, brochures and posters. The diversity of subject matter included two cookbooks, covers for more than 60 beer magazines and the same for audio magazines. His commercial motorcycle work has grown over the years to include magazines around the

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world and commercial clients like Indian Motorcycles, Big Dog Motorcycles, Wiley-X Sunglasses, Harley-Davidson, Nikon Cameras and many of the best custom bike builders in America.

Over the last decade, Michael has contributed work to many books on motorcycling including images specifically requested by Willy G. Davidson for his 100th anniversary book on Harley. The ten "coffee-table" books with his name on the cover include two on Sturgis, large format books on choppers, and individual books on builders Arlen Ness, Billy Lane and Indian Larry. Since 2000, Michael has been exhibiting his photography again in public institutions including solo shows of his work at more than 15 galleries and museums. Michael's reputation as a motorcycling photographer has led to Michael being featured in photography, motorcycling and general interest magazines as well as a number of television shows.

On a more personal note, Michael married his wonderful wife Catherine in 1982. They met when they were both on a 5-day holiday in Big Sur, California, where Catherine was vacationing from her home in Dublin, Ireland. They have two children, a daughter Kiera who was born in 1985, and son Sean who was born in 1988. Incidentally, you never could totally take the music out of Michael. While he wasn't about to start lugging the drums around again, he discovered the Irish penny whistle could fit in his pocket. It has become a great outlet and perfect way to pass the time in the middle of a highway waiting for the right bike or the right light. If you are riding down an open highway and happen to hear an Irish jig coming from a photographer straddling the double yellow line way up ahead, it's probably Michael about to take your photo.

Michael was born and raised in a suburban area of New York. His mom was Czechoslovakian and his dad was a pilot fighter for the USA during World War II.

Michael got hooked on photography when he used his father's camera. Developing his own pictures in the dark room literally changed how Michael looked at the world.

Michael is not thinking about the legacy he wants to leave. He is focused on doing what he loves; composing pictures. Michael prefers not to use women as mere "by-product"



in his work. He says there is no need for that. Michael says that he prefers to let the product speak for itself. Using women distracts from the purpose of showcasing his clients' products.

Michael says that if he was considered an "artist" by others it would be an honor. Now part of the motorcycle Hall of Fame in Sturgis, Michael was once completely surprised by industry leaders such as Arlen Ness and over six hundred others when he was publicly acknowledged and given a bike on the stage during an award event which he was suppose to cover as a photographer.

Michael's role models as a photographer among others include; "Cartier Brasson" (1900), "Robert Frank" (1924), "Gary Winogrand" (1928) and "Friedelander" (1934).

When I asked Michael if he had any fears he said he was not aware of his own fears and that maybe he should think about this a little more. "Everyone has fears" he said. If he had a knife or a gun pulled on him he said he knows he would experience fear. Michael just does not like fear. He says it "prevents people from doing something". I agree. In my opinion, guilt is also something that prevents people from doing something. Pet peeves? Michael says he has too many of them. "I am a perfectionist". Like myself, Michael detests stupid behavior on motorcycles and that is certainly a pet peeve we both share.

As mentioned, Michael is a father of two. He never thought he would have kids. "I love kids. Sharing with them. Vacationing. Playing games with them. Talking with them." Michael says it is too easy to generalize and say that kids don't want to work. He says that a lot of kids don't want to work but a lot of kids do want to work as well. Michael's observation is that today's technology is robbing kids off the richness of true face-to-face relationships. They have become dependent on texting and networking. This takes away from the commitments a real relationship would take.

Michael is an atheist. Interestingly enough he claims however to be "spiritual on some levels". He has a genuine interest in what people believe and is open to understanding other views.



Michael says we need to be thankful for what we have. Life, liberty and pursuit of happiness in our US Declaration of Independence for example are not to be taken for granted. "Sometimes one's freedom means the loss of someone else's freedom".

How true! To me this statement resonates what Christendom claims Christ accomplished; Rom 5:8-9 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

Atheism can be either the rejection of theism, or the position that deities do not exist. In the broadest sense, it is the absence of belief in the existence of deities (God).

In all due respect I find the doctrine of atheism fascinating to some degree. While I certainly do not want to open a debate about this issue or even pretend to offer a resolution, I find the position of atheism quite logically difficult to embrace.

I find one of the most powerful logical arguments against atheism is in the analogies one can draw out of the following example: when we see a beautiful bike and observe the intricacies of its design and how it is built and how it functions, logic causes us to conclude there is a designer or an engineer behind it. The bike did not just make itself out of some lucky coincidence and from nowhere.

When I look at the awesome pure blue color tones in the eyes of my daughters, how their eyes function flawlessly giving them power through their brain to decipher and

differentiate colors, dimensions, forms, perspectives, distances and so on ... when I look at the human body as a whole and closely observe how it is engineered and built as well as the multitude of functions it has, I just cannot come to the conclusion there isn't someone behind it all who engineered everything so perfectly.

When I look at a common picture I know there is a photographer behind it who captured the image for me to see it. When I look at Michael Lichter's work, I know there is a process that went from conceptualizing the image in his mind to methodologically thinking through and planning for every factor involved such as weather, scheduling, lighting, shadow, space, scene, distance, shutter timing, props, colors, subject, framing, angle, technology etc in order to get to the panned end results, only a true professional quality photographer can get to. I believe Michael is not only an artist but he is also an image creator, designer and engineer. He is a conductor for symphonies of colors which silently inspires the bikers in us through our eyes as the sunshine penetrates the house through its' windows. Don't believe me? Log on his site!

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on the asphalt!

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