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# DIRT BIKE

JUNE 1977

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# DIRT BIKE

JUNE 1977 VOLUME SEVEN NUMBER SIX

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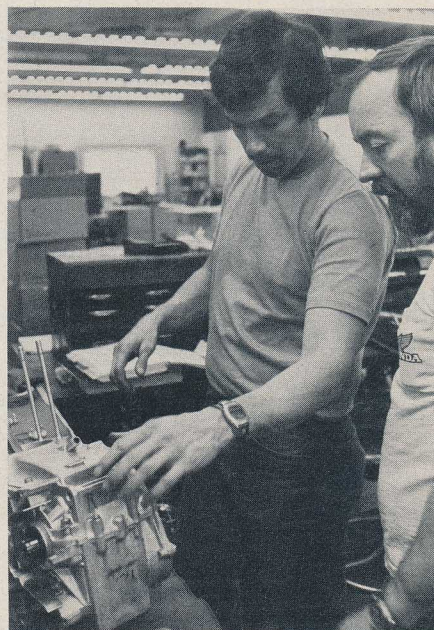
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# SIDEWINDER

by Woods and Carman



Keeping our nose to the ground as we do (it *could* be the front tire), your DIRT BIKE crew picked up some tasty hints about two weeks ago. A small packet of typed pages and photos from IBEX films was the occasion. With visions of screen tests dancing in our heads, we tore it open. "Ho Hum," said we, "another press release."

It took a short while for us to realize that this was something out of the ordinary. The folks at IBEX, it seems, were filming a new movie, one that would deal, we were told, on a fictional level, with the national MX circuit. To be produced by Elmo Williams, the man responsible for saving *High Noon* and producing *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, the film, called *Sidewinder One*, would star Michael Parks, Marjoe Gortner, Susan Howard and Alex Cord. Certainly enough to excite our interest, thought we. Parks, of course, earned a warm spot in moto hearts through the successful series, *Then Came Bronson*. Gortner had done bike-oriented things himself, the TV movie *Pray for the Wildcats*, among others.

At any rate, we decided to poke around and see what we could see. Said poking eventually led us to an interview with the producer and talks with Parks and Gortner.

How will the movie be? Will it deal honestly with motocross, will the DIRT BIKE staff ever get bit parts? The answers to all of these lie ahead.

## PART THE FIRST: "ANY TIME YOU'RE READY, E. W."

Your intrepid DB reporters, Woods and Staff Writer Carman, were apprehensive as they drove into the Twentieth Century-Fox lot. Clearly some hard-nosed investigative journalism was called for. Secretly, we both hoped to be discovered. Having arrived early, we filled the time eyeing the lot lovelies and fantasizing about our upcoming series, a show about two happy-go-lucky cops who work the morgue. "The Dead Beat," we decided it should be called.

Elmo Williams looks like a producer. I mean, we've all seen the movies. He welcomed us into his office and began to talk about *Sidewinder*. Williams explained to us that IBEX had not been overly enthused about

**OPPOSITE PAGE:**  
Stuntman Gary Davis does a little  
*Sidewindin'*.



# ONE

*DIRT BIKE goes  
Hollywood to dig into the upcoming  
motocross movie*





doing a motocross film at first, but, he said, "When I took them the articles from some of the magazines, one of them yours, they began to take an interest in it."

Filming the picture was difficult. The original plan was to shoot footage of a number of the European GP races to incorporate into the finished movie. Time and money eventually limited them to films of the Luxembourg GP, which eventually found their way into the movie. Williams was impressed by his first exposure to pro motocross. "When you move around the track and see the physical punishment these guys take, it's incredible!"

Much of the film's race footage, we were told, was shot on tracks in New Mexico. By using Albuquerque, Taos and Santa Fe circuits, the movie makers were able to get a variety of terrain to simulate different areas of the country, as well as mobs of avid MXers eager to flash it up for the cameras.

We thanked Williams for the information, only slightly chagrined that he had failed to recognize our star quality, and left dreamland. Next stop, Marjoe Gortner.

#### PART THE SECOND: MARJOE IN THE MORNING

The Sportsmen's Lodge in Sherman Oaks sounded more imposing than it



turned out to be. Marjoe's agent had phoned the evening before, saying that Marjoe would be able to give us some time during a breakfast-before-business stop in the morning.

With bells on (Levi's Slim Legs, I believe), we drove into the parking lot. Thankfully, the coffee shop was no more imposing than the average new era ham'n'egger; thankfully too, we were able to find Marjoe immediately.

Gortner is not a newcomer to motorcycle-related movies, he was quick to tell us. Aside from the aforementioned ... *Wildcats* film he has also recently worked for producer

“**(Elmo Williams) “When you move around the track and see the physical punishment these guys take, it's incredible!”**”

Irwin Allen in *Viva Knievel*, a movie credit that he shares with *Side-winder's* stunt man, Gary Davis.

We talked with Marjoe about the bikes used in the film.

"On this picture we used some KX Kawasakis," Gortner said, "and I don't mean this to sound like a commercial, but the other bikes were all needing repairs. The Kawasakis, we never had to touch them, though they were laid down pretty often."

Though he is an interested motocross spectator, Marjoe said that desert riding was his favorite off-road sport. Speaking from this experience, he feels that the movie takes a realistic, accurate approach to dirt riding.

"It is not a commercial film for a person who's not into the sport to go and see," he said. "The main thing in the movie is the bikes and the racing."

The motorcycle stunts, as performed by Gary Davis and Michael Parks' double, Eddie Mulder, among others, are an important part of the movie, providing much of the excitement and flash. Marjoe felt that there should have been more of the stunts used in the final product.

"I'm a little aggravated ... there's this stunt that, well, that I think should have been left in. Actually Gary did it, doubling me, and pulls a wheelie, coming by the checkered flag, standing on the saddle, and grabs the flag. It was a great stunt, but they took

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“  
(Marjoe Gortner) “It is not a commercial film for a person who’s not into the sport to go and see.”  
”

it out of the movie.”

In *Sidewinder* Marjoe plays the younger of the two-man team.

“The character that I play is a really reckless hotshoe, a guy who just balls a lot of chicks and goes from race to race.”

During the interview Gortner worked on his breakfast, while Carman snapped pictures.

“You’re going to get a lot of pictures of me with egg on my face,” Gortner joked.

Chet and I had seen *All The President’s Men*, however, and remained stoic in the face of this double entendre.

Marjoe closed off the interview with a comment about his producer.

“Elmo had a lot of guts to make this picture ... it’s a film that’s really geared for a special audience. I kind of admire him for it.”

We talked a bit more, aimlessly, hinted at getting bit parts in Marjoe’s next movie (we’ll be discovered yet!), and were on our way to the next step of our investigation.

### PART THE THIRD: HERE COMES BRONSON

There are few people connected with the motion picture/television industry who are better known for their motorcycle involvement, with the possible exception of Steve McQueen, than Michael Parks. Parks’ series,

*Then Came Bronson*, was watched weekly by some 45 million persons, many of them bikers who were more than willing to see a CZ substituted for a Harley in some of the scenes, in order to watch a show that went to some pains to accurately depict their lifestyle.

In person, Mike Parks gives the lie to the myths about standoffish “personalities.” We met him at the doors of the Tax Board, where he had business to conduct. He immediately made a hit with the *DIRT BIKE* sensitivities by suggesting that we head for a bar across the street to conduct the interview. In the simple act of crossing the street he was hailed by a number of passersby. He responded without false embarrassment, and without condescension, as if waving to friends.

As one would guess, Parks has had some heavy involvement with bikes in his personal life.

“My only transportation for years was a bike, long before the series, I started out in about 1950 on an Indian.

“You know, you get out on one of those cold mornings, and puke a couple of times trying to kick it over.”

Mike came to *Sidewinder* through Earl Bellamy, the director, who also directed one of the *Bronsons*.

“I was offered a lot of motorcycle movies, but they were all, you know,

greasy chains and crap in the pants stuff. This movie is decent, you can take your kids to it.”

Parks has a reputation as a rebel in Hollywood, an image that may endear him to fans but hasn’t helped him to get roles.

“Talent is really secondary to just about anything in Hollywood,” he said, adding, “I always change the dialogue of anything I’m in if it doesn’t work. I rewrote about 70 percent of the *Bronsons*. These guys don’t care, they hire a writer that last week was working on *The Flying Nun* or something, you know?”

Parks agrees with Gortner about the audience that *Sidewinder* will reach. He emphasizes that the story of the movie is light, but feels that off-road enthusiasts will be going to see the bikes.

“It’s not *Citizen Kane*, but it’d be hard to do *Citizen Kane* on a motorcycle anyhow.

“You know, if you’re doing a story about a guy who races cars, then let’s see him race cars. If you’re doing a story about a guy who leaps tall buildings in a single bound, he’s gotta be hoppin’ a lot.”

In talking about *Sidewinder*, we mentioned the press releases to Mike. They had been overly melodramatic, you know, “Men who put their lives on

*Continued on page 40*

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# SIDEWINDER

Continued from page 21

the line" stuff, and almost prevented us from doing anything on the movie at all. Parks laughed.

"They (the people who write releases) don't know a Cushman from a Schwinn. I mean, they don't know where the pedals stop and the engine starts. They say, 'Well, we've handled Judy Garland ...'"

Never having heard the story of why the *Bronson* series ended, we asked him. He responded that he was pressured to put more violence in the show, to turn Bronson into a street-fighter type.

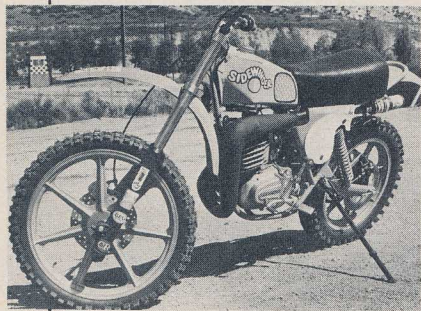
"So I quit, and I didn't get any work for four years, I couldn't get a job.

"The major studios won't use me... I

won't kiss anybody's ass, I guess that's it.

"It's a funny town. You've got picture after picture going into the toilet with guys who couldn't spell 'act' with a computer. The movie loses a million bucks and they raise their salaries."

The upshot of the interview had Carman and Woods asking Parks if



GEE, I'VE NEVER RIDDEN A  
MOVIE STAR BEFORE!

The story of *Sidewinder One* concerns the development and competition testing of a new, American-built, motorcycle. Obviously, in order to film the movie, the producer needed to find a bike that would function as a motocrosser, yet look different enough to be believable as a completely new machine.

In order to fill this need, several AW250 Maicos were obtained and the *Sidewinder* people set about making them look as different from stock Maicos as possible, while keeping them workable on the motocross track. The result they came up with, though certainly not to be confused with a completely functioning motocross machine, is interesting, to say the least.

Morris magnesium wheels replace the spoked stockers. Braking is handled by Airheart discs front and rear, the rear a hydraulic unit, the front mechanical.

From Wheelsmith came the pipe and footpegs, and Graham Sheet Metal fenders and handlebars replaced the standard Maico equipment.

Finally, "Maico" was ground off the forks and engine. The engine was disguised with a bit of painting and drilling, and the whole bike was painted "Sidewinder Blue," which pleasantly complimented the Works Performance shocks used on the bike.

Out of curiosity, and to get a few action shots for this story, we coned our way into a ride on one of the fully

set-up Sidewinders.

Gary Davis, stuntman for the movie and coordinator for the stunt crew of R. A. Rondell, Scott Doc Stader and Eddie Mulder, brought the bike out to Indian Dunes. Prepped by the movie's mechanics and back-up stuntmen, Gary Feil and Bruce Gantenbein, *Sidewinder* looked bright-eyed and bushy tailed, and ready to go.

Since there were no major engine modifications (none, excluding the pipe and subsequent jetting changes), the bike pulled exactly like a Maico 250.

We were pleased with the suspension setup, though the front could likely have benefited from heavier oil. The mag wheels, though they probably added to *Sidewinder's* unsprung weight, were not at all noticeable.

We were most surprised by the brakes, which we found to be beautifully progressive and awesomely strong. Gary explained that a bit of air was left in the line of the rear hydraulics to achieve that "feel."

The only problem with riding *Sidewinder*, actually, was the notice that it drew from everyone else on the track. It is, as we said, bright, and a hard motorcycle to ignore. It also seemed to draw play-race challenges from everyone around.

It wasn't that Woods really *wanted* to run over Carman in the photo session, he just *had* to try to pass that Yamaha back...



“**(Michael Parks) “I was offered a lot of motorcycle movies, but they were all, you know, greasy chains and crap in the pants stuff.”**

he'd like to come along on a DIRT BIKE trail ride sometime. Mike agreed, but said he'd have to put it off for a while:

"Right now I'm up to my ass in alligators. When you're up to your ass in alligators, you forget you were there to clean the swamp."

The DIRT BIKE crew had their answer ready, carefully pre-rehearsed for this moment. It was not for nothing that we'd spent those hours in front of our TV sets.

"Well, hang in there," we said.

At this point we haven't seen the finished movie. Perhaps next month's issue will have the first-ever review by the DIRT BIKE Film Criticism Board. Until then, we can only judge by what we've learned from talking with the people responsible for *Sidewinder One*. A lot of work and a lot of honest effort have gone into this film. While it may not be the final, definitive motorcycle epic, it's a first step. Time will have to tell how far we have to go.