

# Vicarious Voyages

AS I WRITE THIS, a steady pounding of freezing rain is pouring outside, snow is threatening to fall tomorrow, and the malignant effects of PMS—Parked Motorcycle Syndrome—are in devastatingly full effect. In desperate search of a fix for my winter riding jones, I recently discovered two excellent substitutes for the real thing.

## Gaurav Jani's *Riding Solo To The Top Of The World* DVD

MCN Rating ●●●●○

Gaurav Jani's film has generated plenty of buzz since its debut in late 2006, primarily because it is so astonishingly well shot. What makes it even more miraculous in its achievement is that Mr. Jani directed, scripted, filmed and narrated the entire journey on his own, without any help whatsoever.

The 70-day, 3000-mile saga begins in Mumbai, India, and leads to the utterly remote Changthang Plateau in Ladakh, between the Himalayas and Karakoram mountain ranges near the Chinese border. Jani's motorcycle of choice is an Enfield Bullet 350, hopelessly loaded down with hundreds of pounds worth of camping gear and video equipment, earnestly struggling to deal with the extremely rugged mountain terrain at an average altitude of over 15,000'.

As anyone who has ever produced even a primitive travelogue knows, taking pictures and videos en route can be a tedious task. Consequently, any viewer of this DVD can only stand in awe at Jani's Herculean efforts to set up a rolling camera in one of the harshest environments in the world, ride through a pass to capture the shot, go back to verify it, pack the gear away, and then do it all over again a few miles later. It must be seen to be believed, and the film's breathtaking depictions of this area's desolate conditions define true adventure travel at its finest.

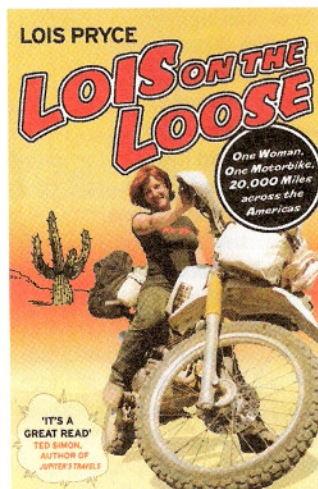
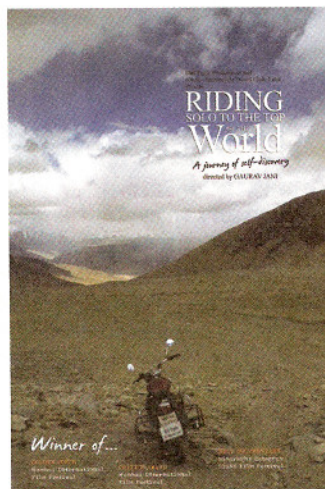
In stark contrast to bellyaching Hollywood "adventurers" who are closely followed by convoys full of backup equipment, doctors, mechanics, assistants, and camera crew, Jani's absolute reliance on his own instincts and force of will are refreshing to say the least.

For example, when his Enfield stopped breathing over the Marsimik La (the highest motorable pass in the world, at 18,634')

he simply got off and pushed it over the summit. As a genuine lone adventurer, he had no other choice.

As such, this film is about much more than motorcycling—it's about facing down challenges and achieving self-discovery.

A majority of Jani's time is spent off the Bullet camping with the Chang-pas, the nomadic shepherds who live on the Changthang Plateau. Little is known about the Chang-pas, and here Jani takes us into



their lives with all the keen insight of a professionally produced *National Geographic* documentary. Jani also gains access to previously unfiled Buddhist monasteries and festivals along the way, and presents his various experiences with stunning authenticity.

With this movie, Jani has firmly established himself among the new generation of enlightened moto-adventurers who are opening our eyes to the vast world around us from the saddles of their motorcycles.

## *Lois On The Loose* By Lois Pryce

MCN Rating ●●●●○

After seeing this book recommended on [www.advrider.com](http://www.advrider.com), I picked up a copy to see what all the fuss was about, and it is indeed one of the most highly entertaining motorcycle travelogues I've ever read. The story is one wintering hermits can all aspire to: After a short motorcycle vacation around Europe, Lois Pryce returns to her job at the BBC, only to find herself woefully unhappy. Oppressed by the unrelenting banality of office life, wanderlust kicks in, and Pryce decides to hit the road again. She contrives a plan to quit her job, ship her Yamaha XT225 Serow trail bike to Anchorage, AK, and set off on a 10-

month, 20,000-mile tour of the entire length of the Americas. Her destination is the world's southernmost city, Ushuaia, located in the Argentinian province of Tierra del Fuego.

From the very first page, Pryce's irresistibly sardonic style is addicting, especially for those of us who enjoy the bone-dry English sense of humor. As a veteran reader of many motorcycle travelogues, I was expecting to once again read about the freezing rain, roasting heat, mechanical breakdowns, tangles with the law, frustrating border crossings, and blissful freedom of moto-adventuring. The book has all of these elements in spades, but what makes it special is Lois Pryce's ability to communicate in such witty fashion. Her biting descriptions of the various characters she meets along the way are every bit as amusing as the actual story of the trip.

From the sophisticated Canadian Mountie who impounds her Serow, to barely fleeing from gangsters posing as cops in Nicaragua, to the shocking crash of her Serow-riding friend Amalia in Bolivia, Lois Pryce's words draw you into the moment. But despite these requisite hairy experiences, the overall story is light, fun, and easy, and you find yourself silently urging Lois on toward Ushuaia.

The only complaint one could possibly have about *Lois On The Loose* is the lack of color pictures. Apparently, the European version of the book is chock full of them, but we Yanks must make do with black and white. Fortunately, Lois Pryce's web site, [www.loisontheloose.com](http://www.loisontheloose.com), boasts many galleries of the Americas trip, as well as information and pictures of a recently completed trans-African journey as well. A book detailing this latest adventure is due out this June, and if it's anything like *Lois On The Loose*, it too will definitely cure the PMS blues.

—Moshe K. Levy

**Gaurav Jani / Dirt Track Productions—\$21.99; +91 9833013039 (phone); [www.dirttrackproductions.com](http://www.dirttrackproductions.com); [www.60kph.com](http://www.60kph.com)**

**Lois On The Loose—\$23.95; [www.loisontheloose.com](http://www.loisontheloose.com), available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)**