

Sit Stay Ride: An entertaining story of some America's sidecar dogs

A documentary by Geneva and Eric Ristau

Review By Wes Fleming #87301

IN FEBRUARY 2011, WHEN I FINALLY got my sidecar rig home, I called my wife Penny down to take a look at it.

“You know what this means, don't you?” I asked her. She shook her head. “Now we have to get a dog.”

Instead of a dog, though, our daughter spends time in the sidecar, but my little girl will be heading off to college in a few years, and I'm going to need a sidecar companion.

Sit Stay Ride is a simple, classic documentary that juxtaposes action footage with interview footage. It is, to my knowledge, the only documentary to feature dogs and sidecars, and it's well worth your time and money. There's nothing earth shattering going on here, but the storytelling is clear and thoroughly interesting.

The film features thirteen families – 15 dogs and about as many people. BMWs are heavily favored by the riders, including a 1972 R 75/5, 1977 R 100/7, 1988 R 100, 1993 R 100 RT, 2003 and 2004 R 1150 GSA, and a 2008 R 1200 GSA. There are three Ural rigs and the rest of the sidecar setups are a couple of Harley-Davidsons and a Triumph. While some of the riders talk about their rigs a little, it's primarily to discuss how the dog has taken over the tub rather than anything resembling hardcore technical matters.

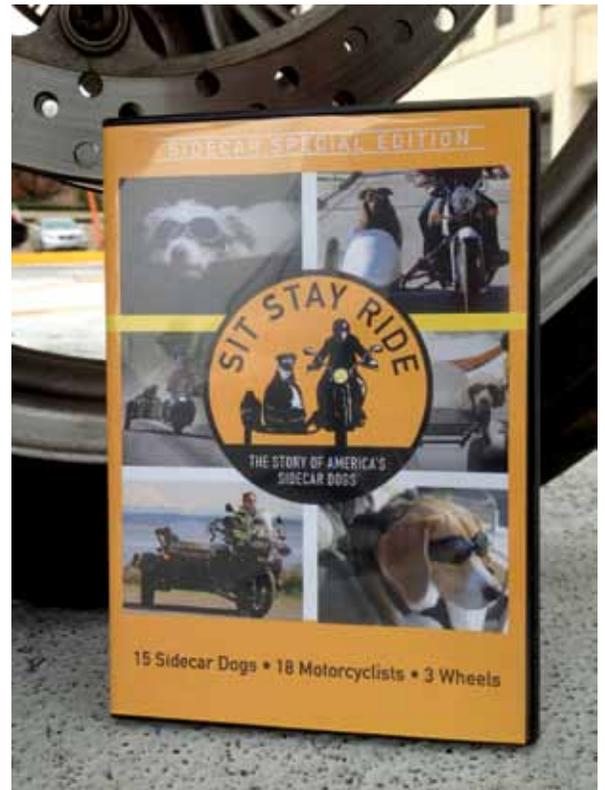
The dogs really are the stars of *Sit Stay Ride*, and one dog in particular – Bruce, a bull mastiff – completely steals the show. The one negative feature of this film is the overuse of slow motion footage, but when it comes to Bruce, every single slo-mo frame is worth it. Bruce just loves his '88 R 100, and it's clear every time he's on screen. Jake the Wonder Dog, a border collie, is another

scene-stealer. Jake's person, Gary McLuen, is one of the GSA drivers and lives and works on a farm despite needing a wheelchair to get around. When it's time to ride, Jake hops in the sidecar and McLuen folds up his wheelchair, then mounts it on the back of his GSA.

The film is organized by the juxtaposition of a general subject, which several of the riders discuss, and the stories of individual dogs and their people. Each individual story is set off by nice riding footage and a location; the locations range from the east to the west in the lower 48 and everywhere in-between. The subjects range from training the dogs (and people) for the sidecar and preparing the dogs for the ride to how the dogs experience the world while riding and how the dogs connect with their people.

One subject that is apparently dear to the filmmakers' hearts is rescue dogs. Most, if not all of the dogs featured in *Sit Stay Ride* were rescued by various organizations or adopted from animal shelters. One rider, Ned Deming, admits that his standard schnauzer Kirby is his fourth shelter dog.

It's also clear from the interviews that both the filmmakers and the riders love sidecars, perhaps despite their inherent “differentness” from motorcycles. One rider, Philippe Murat (whose dogs are Fernand and Albert, the beagles), says of piloting a sidecar rig, “It's a little bit of an



exercise in masochism. It takes a lot of energy.” As a sidecar pilot myself, I completely agree with him! I think the other riders featured in the film would say, though, that having a dog along for the ride makes it all worthwhile.

If you have a sidecar rig but not a dog – or a dog but not a sidecar rig – watching *Sit Stay Ride* could be a dangerous proposition. After watching it, you're entirely likely to want to add to your life whichever of those things you don't have so you can join the brotherhood (and sisterhood) that Dixie's human calls “the .001% of the .001%.”

DVD \$18.50, Blu-ray \$24.50 through sidecardogs.com. ☺