

The **GRATEFUL AMERICAN BIKER** Magazine

Ride to the Warehouse 2020
House of Machines, Downtown Los Angeles
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Girl. Moto. Power. Three words that seem simple enough, but when combined make for an impressive group of women with extraordinary stories, and a welcoming community of supportive people. This was decidedly the case on Saturday, February 1st at The House of Machines in the L.A. Arts District. A self-described, “beacon against the white noise of everyday life”, THoM provided a

comfortable refuge for likeminded folks in the mood to celebrate what motorcycling means to them. If there was one thing that all could agree on, it's that Katie Loftus throws one hell of a party.

Katie's event, Ride to the Warehouse, has been a going concern since 2016. Originally a vehicle to get women riders together into a supportive community, Ride to the Warehouse has grown into a platform of awareness, empowerment, and inspiration for the fastest growing segment of the motorcycle community.

Over a thousand partygoers were treated to outstanding catering and an open bar at the VIP event that kicked off the evening. Every wall was covered with striking photos of the inspiring women featured at the event. Additionally, original works of art from Katie herself, among several others, were on display for all to see. As the evening got looser with the help of drinks, DJ Angela Michelle and a live band set the mood for everyone to shake their moneymakers. All in all, as previously mentioned, a hell of a lot of fun.

But. Anyone can throw a party. I mean, this is L.A. after all. "So what's the deal", you ask, confused yet eager for details. The deal, my friends, is this:

Cancer. Abuse. Debilitating injuries. PTSD. Just a few words that fail to capture the immensity of the struggle in the lives that these women have led. A few more words are vitally necessary to describe the featured participants at this event. Courage. Perseverance. Compassion. Strength. Few things are more moving than someone describing, to a crowd of strangers, the darkest days of their lives and how that pain can be beaten back with the help of friends, love, and a two-wheeled sled on an open highway.

I was privileged enough to meet a few of these extraordinary women and hear their stories firsthand. The first of several inspiring stories was told by Michelle. Michelle suffered a severe stroke in July of 2019. Not long afterward, she purchased a bike and went riding with her doctor. What I found impressive about Michelle, second only to her ability to bounce back and be positive, was twofold: First Michelle, at a guess, is in the neighborhood of 5-foot-nothing. I probably have boots that weigh more than she does. Second, Michelle rides a 110 horsepower, 80 lb-ft of torque, 2019 BMW R-Nine-T Pure. Brother, I tell you, she is fearless.

Another inspiring perspective is from Nicole. Nicole is an artist, riding instructor, and confessed speed demon. When we met, Nicole was searching for a Harley Davidson sticker for her mobility scooter, which she explained was because she only wanted to ride a Harley, even though one had given her the broken leg she was nursing. Nicole said something inspiring that I'll take with me: "Whatever you get out of it [motorcycling] tells you a lot about the type of person you are... a motorcycle is truth."

Finally, Philecia, Goddess of Focus, the Unrepentant, She-who-tells-it-like-it-is, let her presence be FELT. A stage 4 breast cancer survivor, Philecia took the stage with authority midway through the evening. Throughout her battle with cancer and chemotherapy, nothing could stop Philecia from getting on a bike even if it was just for a ride on the back. Since then, she's started her own business with the profits going to fund late stage cancer research. Long since having earned her right to be heard, Philecia made certain that the more inebriated crowd in the back could either shut up or GTFO. Girl. Moto. Power.

Featured on display at the party was a significant project by Motorcycle Missions, an organization whose purpose is to help Veterans and First Responders with PTSD through "motorcycle therapy". Krystal Hess, the founder of Motorcycle Missions, brought together 6 outstandingly talented female veterans from the L.A. and San Diego areas to create a stunning piece of moving art. With the help of Shane Conley of how2wrench.com and Doffo Winery, among many other generous sponsors, the vets took home the prestigious People's Choice Award from the 2019 International Motorcycle Show - Long Beach. Starting with a well-preserved and generously donated 1972 Honda GL350, the veterans fabbed, wired, painted, welded, wrenched, and polished their way into a stunning show winner with their retro-mod cafe style.

As a motorcyclist, Saturday night was a treasure trove full of everything Moto-related I could have wanted from art, to stories, to planning new builds and appreciating old ones. As a veteran with PTSD, it was refreshing and touching to see and hear from a community that has persevered through so much. As a human being, Saturday was valuable and meaningful because out there, in our community, are people that through all their dark days, their struggles, their pain, have held to a mission of support, empowerment, recognition, and sisterhood. Thank you for showing me Girl Moto Power.