

Blues & Bikes Fest, Silver City NM

Over the weekend of May 22-24, the Mimbres Region Arts Council hosted its 20th annual Silver City Blues & Bikes Fest. It is reportedly the last remaining FREE Blues Festival in the Southwest; taking place in the town's Gough Park. This gathering has always had great support from bikers. To acknowledge the appreciation the biker community has for great music and to encourage even more riders to attend, it was recently renamed Blues & Bikes Fest. Additional activities were added as well.

Organizer Ginny Wolf indicated that their committee is working to strike the right balance.... "We are trying to do more to attract bikers and still be a *Music Festival* as opposed to a Rally."

Friday's schedule included the Bike Show. They decided to have it People's Choice, "so the public can be involved. It helps bring families and kids out as well as bikers." Makes sense to me... Who doesn't like to look at beautiful motorcycles? There were 33 bikes in the show, in two categories ~ 1984 & earlier and 1985 to present day.

In addition to cash prizes in both categories... 1st place \$500, 2nd = \$250, 3rd = \$100 ~ each winner also received a hand-made trophy by a local artist. They got to pick which trophy they wanted. Congratulations to the winners:

1984 & Earlier ~

1st place: Randy Lemke ~

1947 Harley-Davidson Model 74

2nd place: Pete Cramer ~ 1950 Moto Guzzi

3rd place: Emilio Rivera ~ 1943 Indian Scout

1985 & Later ~

1st place: Lydia Balcena ~ 2008 Custom H-D

2nd place: Lisa Lucero ~ 2013 Softail Slim

3rd place: Mike Shoup ~ 2000 Sportster

There were three kick-off dances, held at different establishments in town on Friday night; to get the music officially underway.

For each of the 3 days Gough Park hosted a variety of vendors plus the 'Wall of Death'. We're told

they performed all weekend and had a packed house every show. In addition to some 50 or so arts & crafts and commercial vendors that were not biker-oriented, there were a dozen or so with biker goods & services such as pinstriping, apparel, accessories, shops, builders; plus event sponsor Barnett's Las Cruces Harley Davidson.

Saturday morning's 'Kneeling Nun Bike Run' was sponsored and put on by local City Councilman Jose Ray. It was not a poker run, but prizes and giveaways were handed out. It was a self-paced ride. Ginny explained that, "The beneficiaries were St. Vincent's Church, Saint Francis Newman Church, Hurley Infant Jesus Church, Snell Middle School, and Mimbres Region Arts Council. Stops included Cafe Del Sol in Mimbres, Lake Roberts Store, and Q's Bistro in Silver City. It makes an 85 mile loop around the Gila Wilderness and Mimbres Valley. It's a beautiful ride. There is a lot of great riding in this area. The local visitors' centers have maps of local rides. We also gave these maps out at the festival. For more on that, go to silvercitytourism.org".

On Saturday, the Music started at noon... and went on into the night. The headliner was Blues Hall of Famer Charlie Musselwhite. Others performers during these 2 days of music included Guitar Slim, Janiva Magness, Andy T Nick Nixon Band, The Greenwood Misses, and The Noodles. Yes, if that name sounds familiar to you, this is the Grateful Dead cover band based out of Tempe, AZ.

Ginny shared that, "We had over 10,000 people attend the festival this year. I would say 65% were from out of town and stayed all weekend. We have a lot of camping in this area so some did camp. I think most used local lodging. There were a few who used the free dry camping in town. We had a good number of motorcycles this year. I would say half the audience had bikes."

Sponsors from inside and outside the commu-

nity contributed to the success of this festival... including Barnett's Las Cruces Harley Davidson, Russ Brown Motorcycle Attorneys, Lawley Toyota, WNMU, State Farm, Wells Fargo, Edward Jones, Positive Energy Solar, Seedboat Gallery, just to name a few. Local artist Lois Duffy created an original painting, entitled Pancho Villa Rides Again, and donated it to the event. The artwork was used for the poster and flyers & then the original painting was auctioned off at the Festival for \$1600.00 to Danny Flores of Sacaton Construction. He is also one of the many volunteers who helped with the Festival.

Ginny added, "This is such a great festival. Anyone who makes it will want to come back every year. We will continue to come up with new ideas and improvements to make the festival better every year. It's also a great team of people who put this party on. We have hundreds of volunteers who make it happen as well. This was our first year officially including the biker community. I have always believed bikers are awesome people. They made this festival a success and I love them for it!"

The Silver City Blues Festival benefits the Mimbres Region Arts Council; which pays the bills for the festival as well as for many other local festivals, concerts, and art-related projects. Silver City also hosts an Americana Festival, 'Pickamania' in September and it is free to the public as well. This year those dates are September 11-13.

Thank you, Ginny Wolf, for your help with this report. It sounds like an outstanding good time!

Betsy

[click title online for pix & more]

