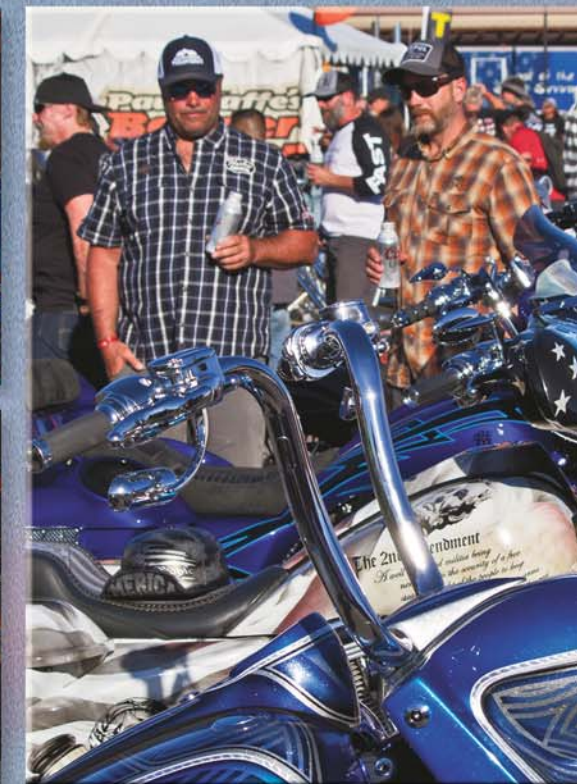


Arizona Bike Week rocks its 25th Anniversary

Photos: Randall Bohl
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2022 was a big year for Arizona Bike Week —after pandemic disruptions in 2020 and postponement of 2021, the event returned to its normal venue at WestWorld of Scottsdale in April for its 25th Anniversary event.

As the event has grown over the years, it has evolved to have two primary components —the Motorcycle Rally and Music Fest.

The RockYard presented major concerts on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, with single-show and multi-day passes available. Any of those included a five-day wristband to an all new PowerYard, home to bike shows, stunt shows, demos, exhibitions, local bands, vendors, the HandleBar Saloon and the Rally

Girls. If you wanted to skip the concerts, you could get a five-day wristband just for that.

With the event industry hard hit over the past two years, separating the two allowed for a new ticket structure that could offer the huge headliner concerts attendees are accustomed to, still at less than half of what seeing the same bands would cost anywhere else, while those who just wanted to come for the rally and not the concerts had an inexpensive new way of doing that.

There were four charity rides during the week—the T-Bar Trail Ride, Hamsters Dry Heat Run, Saddle Up For Kids Ride and East Valley Firefighters Charities Ride. Participant

fees included a PowerYard pass, and about 1,500 complimentary passes were distributed.

The RockYard concerts were moved into the great North Hall at WestWorld, enabling sound and lighting teams to amp up their productions. In addition to two IMag screens flanking the stage, an enormous video wall was added at the back. This presentation hit a high point during Lynyrd Skynyrd's performance of *Free Bird*, when Johnny Van Zant hung his hat on the mic stand and stepped back, as the band continued playing and his late brother Ronnie appeared on the video wall to sing a verse, nearly 45 years after his passing. There wasn't a dry eye in the house

full of rough and tough bikers.

The new PowerYard was hoppin' from the time gates opened until closing time each day. The HandleBar Saloon offered nonstop live entertainment, featuring the best of the best from our local music scene. It kicked off on Wednesday with seven hours of music provided by the incredibly talented young musicians from the Alice Cooper's Solid Rock Teen Centers. The Kickstand Bar rocked each day with a DJ taking requests, and there were Happy Hour Parties in the HandleBar and Kickstand each day, offering a variety of adult games and contests.

Stunt shows were beyond extreme. The

insane FMX jumpers, feeding off the crowd's energy, took it up a notch each time they launched from the ramp. The Ives Brothers' unique tandem Wall of Death shows proved so popular you had to get in well before start time, for a spot on the observation deck.

Campgrounds were a nonstop party, with everyone (especially our Canadian friends) thrilled to be back after being away for so long. The event has continuously added more campsites to its footprint to accommodate ever-increasing demand from those who don't want to miss a minute of the fun.

Area hotels also reported a record number of room nights from visiting attendees.

Arizona Bike Week is always a welcome change for those coming from long, cold winter climates, with the rally becoming an annual destination for more out-of-staters each year. With travel getting back to normal, there were an increasing number of visitors from abroad, as well.

The new format was well received. Put it all together, and there were a conservatively estimated 76,000 in attendance.

The eventors report being thrilled by a positive response to the changes they made this year, and they remain committed to continually making adjustments based on feedback and the desires of attendees. ■

