

Shoot Like A Pro

How To Photograph A Feature Bike By Bob Feather



A simple point-and-shoot camera that's at least 8mp and a few easy techniques are all it takes to get great pictures of your motorcycle.

A great photo of your bike serves as a reminder of all those hours spent customizing and personalizing your ride. But maybe your skill set works better with a mechanic's tool set than an F-Stop. Has the prospect of getting an awesome shot completely eluded you? Are you ready to get down to the business of doing this right? Then grab your camera and let's go! It's time to commit random acts of greatness on your next photo outing!

You don't need the latest in digital technology to capture stunning photos of your bike. A simple point-and-shoot camera and a few easy techniques are all it takes. I'm going to stick with the basics here; you'll figure out how to expand upon many of these tips yourself. And, just like motorcycling, there's nothing like practice to hone your photographic skills. All of the bike photos in this article were taken using a small point-and-shoot camera, not pro gear, so these results are in fact attainable by anyone who is willing to try.



This particular view graces more magazine covers and manufacturers' brochures than any other photographic angle.

What's Your Angle?

Perhaps the most classic motorcycle shot of all time is the right-front-angle shot.

So how do you get your bike to look like one of the choice steeds on the cover of a magazine? We're going to look at some common mistakes people make and offer simple solutions that will have you shooting like a pro in no time. Let's compare the two photos below and see what made the difference.

What Went Wrong?

Here we parked the bike in the middle of an industrial area with a distracting background. In the left photo, I used a wide-angle lens setting on the camera, which includes too much background and causes the bike to be dwarfed. And the fork is turned to the left, which breaks the flowing lines of the bike. Notice my shadow in the foreground, too. This is a common mistake.

To fix it, I straightened the front wheel, stepped back from the bike, and knelt down for a lower perspective. Then I used the zoom feature on my camera to bring the bike in closer. A cool effect, called compression, occurs when you zoom a camera. Even though the bike hasn't moved, the compression effect makes it, and the black fuel tanks behind it, appear to be much closer to each other in this photo than in the previous one. What was once distracting clutter is now a high octane background! The bike stands tall and proud.



Here is a classic example of a bike photo gone horribly wrong. Most people walk up to their bike, point the camera, and just grab the shot without taking even a moment to look and see what's around them.



It's important to note that the bike has not been moved for this photo. Stepping back, kneeling down, and zooming in sometimes is all it takes to turn a bad shot into a great shot.

Keep It Clean

Perhaps the hardest part of motorcycle photography is choosing a good background. The key is to keep it simple. Don't let the image get cluttered with elements that add nothing useful to the photo. When shooting your motorcycle, make sure that the bike is the star of the show. Spend the time to find a location where the bike is not surrounded by distractions like dumpsters, utility poles, parked cars and other nonessential things. Keep it clean and uncluttered. Your photo will look much better.

I can't tell you how many times I've seen photos of someone's bike parked at a beautiful scenic overlook where the owner took the photo with a trash can directly behind the seat. Look around! Take notice of your environment. You have the power to overcome these problems by simply moving the bike or moving yourself to one side or the other.

Weak Zoom

Not everyone is going to have a camera with a powerful zoom. Many cameras have a wide field of view for taking family photos and scenic vacation shots and are not ideally suited to shooting your bike. Fear not! Even with a short lens, you can get great photos if you compose them carefully.



Here we see a bike parked on a sidewalk with the photographer standing very close to his machine and using the maximum wide-angle lens setting. While this photo is awful it is not hopeless!



First, straighten out the front wheel. Never turn the front wheel away from the camera. In the previous photo you can see how this makes the bike look short and stubby. Move to the right side of the bike a bit and squat down even with the engine. Now it looks awesome!

Including The Environment

Colors and textures can add a lot to a photograph if they're used carefully.



Here I've included water, sandy beach, and a wooden railing. All these elements combine to enhance the photo with soft colors and textures that contrast the bright red and chrome elements of the bike. But something has gone terribly wrong. Let's make a few simple corrections that will transform this scene into a great photo.



First, straighten that front wheel. Then step way back and use your zoom to bring the bike in closer. Next, get down low and hold the camera level. Note that the bike is in the exact same place in both photos. The only difference is that I moved back, away from the bike and then zoomed in on it to recompose the photo.

