

IN MY GARAGE : CHARLEY BOORMAN



Boorman's Godfather, the famous Lee Marvin, did a film called *The Wild Ones* with Marlon Brando. Boorman refreshes my memory cache: "Marlon Brando was the good guy and Lee was the bad guy." Showing his deep love for his Godfather, Boorman built the bike that Marvin rode as an ode to him. Like many collectors: "I also have a bunch of bikes that are just in pieces, projects that I've started and haven't finished."

When it comes to finding out the best routes and roads to travel around South Africa and Africa, Charley speaks fondly about Lesotho and the genuinely kind people you will meet there, the epic Sani Pass, and the Drakensberg Mountains in general. The reason Charley is in South Africa is for his motorcycle tour of the year, leading bikers on a self-professed "insane route" from Cape Town to Victoria Falls and back via Zimbabwe and Botswana, then on to Lesotho before travelling through the Garden Route and back to the Mother City.

For the most part, the intention behind these trips is to reveal how great Africa truly is and here safety is of utmost importance. He reminisces back to when he was in the country doing *Extreme Frontiers SA*, where he took a motorbike and rode all over South Africa. "I know all the bikers here know this, but the riding you guys have on your back door is just *phenomenal*, just in Cape Town it is unbelievable! Up to Wuppertal and up toward Springbok, any direction you go really. There are as many gravel roads as there is tar."

The 2015 *Long Way Down* trip uses a combination of BMWs: GS 1200 Adventure, GS Standard, GS 800, GS 650, and two 4x4s that serve as support vehicles. For Boorman, BMW GS bikes are "a bit like how Land Rover is synonymous to, for example, crossing the Nullarbor in Australia. So, the motorbike version would be the BMW GS. They're iconic bikes." He expands, talking about their rich heritage,

superior quality, and strong global presence: "If you don't have a part they can usually get it to you within a reasonable amount of time, which is important. Moreover, they're just great vehicles! They're built to do everything: you can sit on the *Autobahn* doing 200 km/h, or you can go on the most messed-up road for days..."

It was too tempting not to ask whom Boorman would cast in a show if each vehicle were an iconic person. Sporting a broad smile he reveals a stellar cast: "GS 1200 S Adventures would be Steve McQueen because he was a big off-road rider and he did World Enduro; Standard GS would have to be Ted Simons; GS 800 would be George Clooney; GS 650 would be Marilyn Monroe; and the 4x4 would be Arnold Schwarzenegger."

Apart from the technology features that come with each model, riding is ultimately more than just the gear and specs – it is about igniting harmony between machine and Man. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' choice if you're safe when riding on the road; laughing, tasting new cultures, and giving life a no-holds-barred handshake.

Holding Angelina Jolie as a child, growing up with a famous director as a father, and with the legendary Lee Marvin as a Godfather, Boorman is riding life on a high note. His humble candour, witty humour, and sleeves-rolled-up approach is really what stands out – no celebrity hierarchy or pretence – and he is equally as excited to meet you as you are to meet him. The love for his family, friends and the team he works with – and the unwavering passion for motorbikes, adventure travelling, and genuine interest for those who share his wanderlust – feels almost tangible. While Ted Simon might be his most-loved explorer, Boorman has become an icon of inspiration for me. It is only fitting, therefore, I leave the closing words to him: *When I am on the road, riding a motorbike, I get a sense of freedom and time to think about things.*