

Las Vegas Sun

Motorcycle enthusiasts revved up for Las Vegas BikeFest



Kyle Hansen

A crowd gathers around Mark Daley's custom motorcycle, which won the Artistry in Iron competition at the Las Vegas BikeFest on Friday.

By [Kyle Hansen \(contact\)](#)

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About 30,000 motorcycle enthusiasts are in town this weekend for the Las Vegas BikeFest, a four-day event held primarily at the Cashman Center.

That's about the same number who attended last year's event, said organizer Pam Schwartz.

The motorcycle industry is hurting, and other bike rallies across the country have had fewer participants, Schwartz said.

"We're not hurting as much as other motorcycle rallies because it's Las Vegas," she said.

It was Las Vegas' abundance entertainment options and hotel rooms that made the show happen to begin with, said her brother Harry Schwartz, president of Full Throttle Productions.

"I went to other rallies and they never had enough hotel rooms, never enough entertainment," he said.

After years of saying that Las Vegas would be the perfect place for a rally, Pam and Harry Schwartz finally made it happen for the first time nine years ago.

“A bike rally really is about having fun, and Las Vegas is a natural for that,” Harry Schwartz said.

Harley Davidson has been running an advertising campaign with the tag line “Screw it. Let’s Ride.”

Harry Schwartz said a lot of bikers’ have a similar outlook with regard to the economy.

“That’s kind of the attitude bikers have. I think that’s the general feeling at this event,” he said. “People are just done with it and they’re ready to party.”

The event costs just \$15 for the weekend to see booths from more than 250 vendors.

The weekend also includes a world’s strongest biker competition, a \$10,000 poker run, a bikini contest and Mr. and Miss Las Vegas BikeFest competitions.

But the star of the festival is definitely the bikes, especially the 20 bikes entered in the Artistry in Iron competition.

Mark Daley of Thunderstruck Custom Bikes in Medford, Ore., won the competition and said this is one of the shows he chooses to compete in because of the people involved.

He also likes mingling with bike fans, including one who came from Ohio wearing one of Daley’s T-shirts and sporting a tattoo of his company’s logo.

“Stuff like that is pretty cool,” Daley said, “Seeing people come from all of the world and appreciate what we do is part of the reason why I do it.”

Brian Wilson came to Las Vegas from his home in Canada for another conference but extended his stay for a couple days when he realized he had “lucked out” and the bike rally was the same week.

“This is the first time I have seen so much like this,” he said. “It’s just like art.”

“It’s worth coming even if you don’t buy anything just to see the bikes,” he said.

Kelly Wilson of Henderson is a big motorcycle fan and has been to bike rallies all over the country, but she was able to get her coworker Judy Grell to come along this time.

“She invited me to come and I’m glad I did,” Grell said. “I haven’t been on a motorcycle in 30 years, but I’m having a ball.”

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