

Too Far Gone

Todd Blubaugh

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The first picture inside Todd Blubaugh's gorgeous photographic memoir, *Too Far Gone*, is a point-of-view shot over the handlebars of his motorcycle—the desert landscape tilting with perspective, the road blurred by speed. The picture sets the tone for what is a starkly beautiful coffee-table book.

Blubaugh grew up in Kansas, in love with art and motorcycles. He got his first motorcycle when he was twelve, financing the purchase by mowing lawns and cutting firewood. As an adult, he ended up on the West Coast working in the arts, specifically photography. *Too Far Gone* is his personal account of a cross-country journey taken on his hand-built motorbike, The Red Head, after his parents' sudden death. The open road becomes a source of artistic inspiration, psychological freedom, and spiritual healing.

Blubaugh's lens gravitates not only toward landscapes and cityscapes but people. The characters of American motorcycle culture are captured in smiling portraits, nude portraits, and in unscripted moments of affection and tenderness. The plein-air aesthetic of the book demonstrates a natural talent for composition as well as an intuitive understanding of the relationship between people and the environment.

Interposed between photographs are letters and vignettes. The assorted texts accentuate the visual narrative with genuine insights. The best entries are lyrical in style and philosophic in scope. "The truth is, the risk makes bikes worth riding," Blubaugh writes after a terrifying ride through a storm. "The borders of our mortality have always been an alluring road to mankind, and we have yet to build a better vehicle to explore them."

Too Far Gone unfolds with haunting beauty. It extends one man's journey of self-discovery across familiar and alien landscapes, finding rare human moments along the way. The book is also a significant record of contemporary motorcycle life in America. In exploring the dynamic intersection of art and travel, it adds a host of fresh perspectives to the revered mythology of the open road.

SCOTT NEUFFER (Fall 2016)

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