



“subdude” Trip Around New York

By Richard J. Atkins #93162



Facing page clockwise from top left: the band named “subdudes” in Albany and Pawling, New York, on my R1200C (L-R: Tim Cook, John Magnie, Jimmy Messa, Tommy Malone and Steve Amedée) and the Towne Crier Café.

For some it's about the ride. For some, it's about the music. Why not combine the two? Having found out that a longtime favorite band, the *subdudes*, were doing three shows around New York State, it seemed like a perfect opportunity to do some motorcycle riding, see a terrific band and experience the fun of riding around the roads of New York. The bags were packed, maps consulted, tank fueled and laptop stowed (ah, yes, it is the 21st Century...).

Leaving from my home in Port Washington, New York, I headed south to the infamous LIE, the dreaded Long Island Expressway. The characteristically unpredictable Long Island traffic met me only three miles into the trip. The Nassau Police were sending traffic back—away from the Expressway! Rerouted, I drove through the Americana Shopping Center (Billy Joel, among others, would refer to it as the Miracle Mile), took local streets to the next LIE entrance, and got underway.

Only a few years after it first opened, the Long Island Expressway became known as “the world's largest parking lot.” Even bassist (and motorcyclist) Tony Levin once remarked about navigating in the metropolitan area on his way to a gig that the, “venue is beautifully situated right on the beach, but getting there, through notorious Long Island traffic, is usually a big pain...” I've lived here all my life and, in this regard, my experiences tally closely with his.

After about an hour and a half, I ended up on Route 22 in Pawling, New York, a village of a little more than 2,000 people. English Quakers settled Pawling around 1740. The village has some claims to fame. George Washington stayed here in 1778 as he planned an advance on New York City. Nearby, one

will find the famed Appalachian Trail. In addition, Pawling boasts the Gunnison Museum of Natural History, the Oblong Friends Meeting House, and the Towne Crier Café. Since 1972 the Towne Crier has presented folk, jazz, blues, Celtic, bluegrass, cajun, zydeco and world music. Tonight's treat—music from the *subdudes*, with a local artist Dan Pelletier opening the show. Dan performed his original piano/vocal songs much to the delight of the audience.

For those who don't know about the *subdudes* (www.subdudes.com), they deserve some explanation... Formed in 1987, the *subdudes* came together at Tipitina's in New Orleans. Their music, which is mostly acoustic, is noted for sparse

instrumentation with a strong emphasis on vocal harmonies. In November 1996, after nearly 10 years and five albums, the *subdudes* went their separate ways. Reunited in the spring of 2002, three of the four original *subdudes* (Tommy Malone, John Magnie, Steve Amedée) recruited additional longtime friends (Tim Cook and Jimmy Messa). In April, the band released “Miracle Mule” on Back Porch Records and is touring relentlessly supporting it. Unmistakably, the *subdudes* are back! The show was energetic, spontaneous and musically “on.” Having been treated to songs such as “Morning Glory,” “It's So Hard,” and even the title track, “Miracle Mule,” among others, the band finished the show and left an audi-



subdude

ence in complete satisfaction.

As for the Towne Crier, the intimate venue can seat upwards of 200 people. Phil Ciganer, owner, told me that, “the goal has been, since it’s out of the way, to make the trip worthwhile.” Phil is not only a great *subdudes* fan, but also a former biker himself. He shared with me that if he ever did return to riding, he’d “get on a Beemer before any other bike.” It was getting late, so I got back in the saddle and spent the night at a friend’s house in North Salem.

The next morning, I entered the Taconic State Parkway, a road that was to provide a scenic, rapid route from New York City to the Bear Mountain Bridge and points north. In 1992, the New York

State Legislature designated the Taconic State Parkway as a “State Scenic Byway.” The gentle contours of the road at this point make it a very enjoyable ride. I traveled north to Route 82 north—toward Ancram/Hudson (35-40 miles past first Rt. 82—Hopewell Junction).

It was lunchtime, so I stopped at The West Taghkanic Diner, in operation since 1953. This eatery is a classic, all-original, Art Deco, roadside landmark, including its neon Indian chief sign. From West Taghkanic, I continued on 82 (past the local orchards and farms) for about five miles to an intersection with a traffic light, where a gentle right placed me onto 9H (turns into 9). This 25-mile span passes Valley Oil Company and Kozel’s Restaurant—classic roadside signs from years ago. Dotted on the map along and near 9/9H are historic sites run by the National Park Service such as the homes

of Martin Van Buren, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Vanderbilt Mansion. Continuing north on this road, no turns, I found myself at 90 West. I took local streets headed into the New York State capital city. Albany was originally known as Fort Orange and was renamed “Albany” in 1664 to honor the Duke of York and Albany.

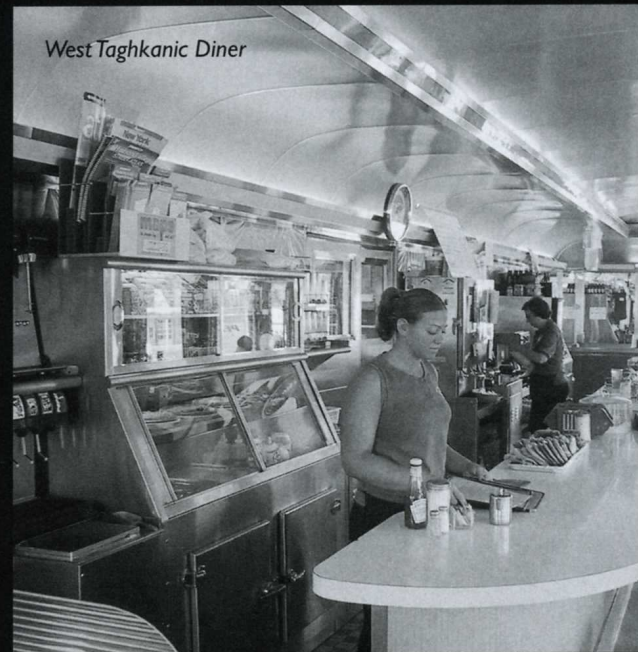
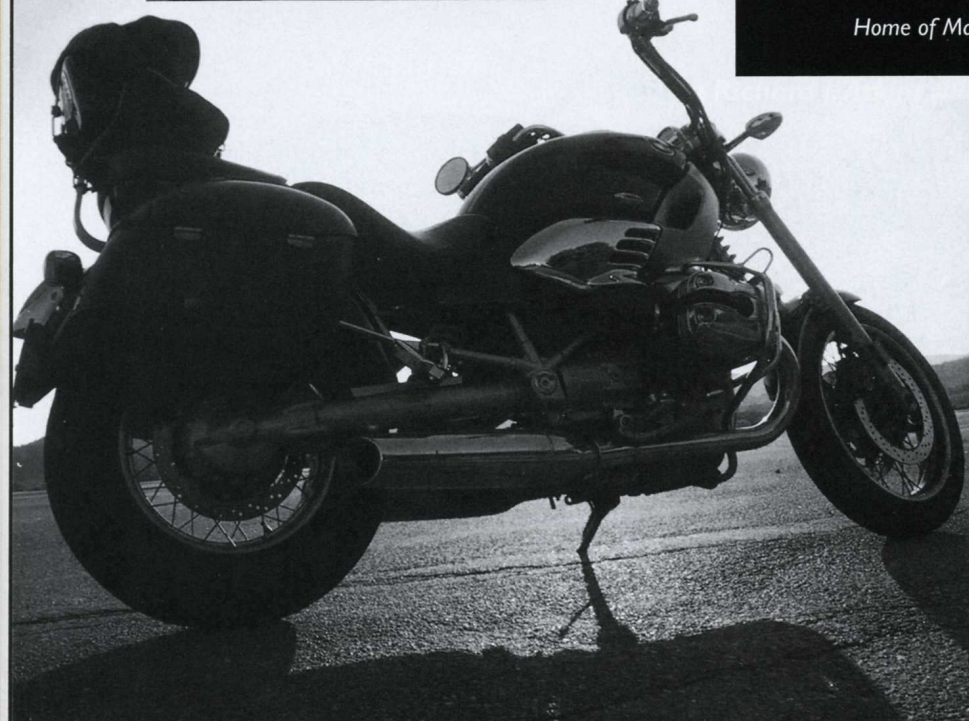
Founded in 1609, Albany is the oldest continuing settlement in the United States. It traces a great deal of Dutch heritage (evidenced in the street names, also the annual Tulip Festival held in Washington Park). Nearby Saratoga Race Track is the oldest thoroughbred racetrack in the nation. Tonight’s *subdudes* show is in Washington Park, originally the site of the State Street Burial Ground. In the 1840s, when the park was commissioned, over 40,000 bodies were exhumed and transferred. The final park design was inspired by ideas and philosophies of Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New



The R1200C and Linda Scott's Stargazer sculpture.



Home of Martin Van Buren.



York City's Central Park, and completed by two of his protégés.

Opening the show was Vusi Mahlasela from South Africa. His "Freedom Tour Celebration" highlights the political fragility of the new democracy in his country. After his moving set of South African poetry-put-to-music, the *subdudes* took the stage. Having had an energy-packed show the night before, the band was primed for a large audience in the park's amphitheater. This was a fabulous show with an excellent response from a very appreciative Albany audience.

At the soundboard, Drew Holhauser was working hard to bring out the best for this band. They recruited him for shows in this area. His normal mixing home is in Amagansett, Long Island, at the Stephen Talkhouse. I looked over and saw Phil Ciganer (Towne Crier) standing next to him, enjoying the show. He meant what he said about being a fan! Backstage,

I snapped a shot of Steve Amedée sitting on my R1200C. He was most impressed with the height of the bike and how that made it a perfect fit for him.

With the second show now over, I fired up the bike and headed toward 90, went down the Taconic, took 82 toward Danbury, and entered I-684, a road known officially by its number. A left exit from 684 empties onto "the Hutch." One of the first parkways in Westchester, the Hutchinson River Parkway was named after Anne Hutchinson. Ms Hutchinson was a pioneer of religious freedom in the American colonies as well as a 17th century Westchester resident. The Hutchinson River Parkway is known for stone-arch bridges and wooden light posts—hallmarks of the roads of builder and designer, Robert Moses. This parkway is an excellent motorcycle ride. Savor the gentle turns and leans.

The Hutch ends at the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge. Robert Moses intended these parkways and bridges to provide easier access from upstate New York and New England

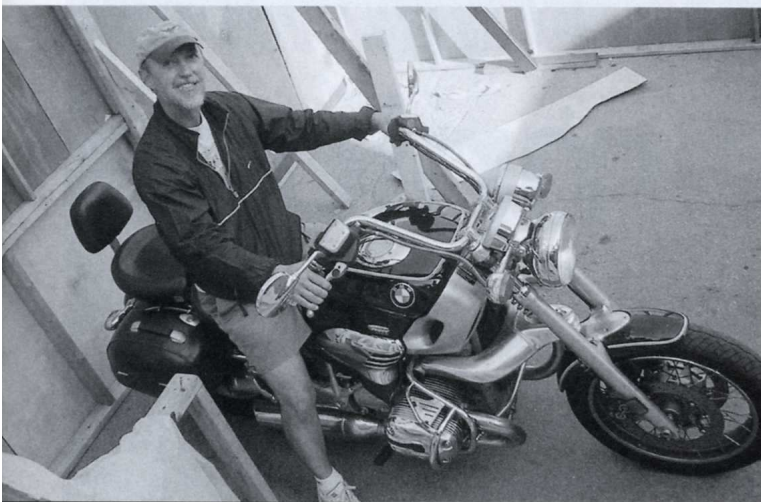
to Jones Beach. Completed in 1939, the Bridge relieved some traffic from the overused Triborough Bridge, provided a link from the north to the airport at North Beach (ultimately renamed LaGuardia Airport) and afforded a direct link for motorists to reach the 1939-1940 World's Fair, which Moses chaired. From the span, riders can admire the spectacular view of upper Manhattan.

I took the Cross Island Parkway—frequently overloaded with traffic—south along the Bayside Marina (beautiful water views). The roadway connects the Long Island parkways to bridges and parkways from the North. From this point, I entered the LIE (again) and headed toward Riverhead. Exiting at County Route 111 south (Exit 70) I passed a familiar and rather interesting landmark. Artist Linda Scott calls her *Stargazer*, "the connection of the above to the below." Many refer to the sculpture as the Gateway to the Hamptons.

After merging onto 27 east, the four-lane highway goes to a two-lane country road through Southampton, Water Mill, Bridgehampton and East Hampton. All of these are very old towns, many of which were settled in the 1600s. Among other things, the hamlet of Amagansett boasts the Stephen Talkhouse, a three-story renovated house offering a wide variety of music.

Mama Lee and Friends were the opening act for this show. Mama Lee, Rose (her daughter) and Jim Lawler (husband), longtime friend and assistant to the *subdudes* and other musicians proved to be a powerful opening act. The striking mother-daughter harmonies were driven by Jim himself at the drums. They took the stage at about 9:00 and offered robust performances of "Need Somebody," as well as the harmony-filled, "The Rain." The *subdudes* have an entertaining way to bring the music closer to people who see them. They walk out into the audience to perform the song, "It's Been Known To Touch Me." Once again, the audience welcomed them with open arms—and wouldn't let them go.

Outside the venue, I took some time to catch up with some of the band members. Music, food, folks, fun, and the ride—what a great way to catch some shows with a band I've been enjoying for quite some time. Adventures such as these make the ride even that much more enjoyable.



Band member Steve Amedée enjoys the R1200C.

subdudes with Phil Ciganer, owner of the Towne Crier Café.

