



Fast Company: A Memoir of Life, Love, and Motorcycles in Italy

David M. Gross

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It's the thick of the mid-1990s boom, and David M. Gross is racking up billable hours for a Manhattan corporate law firm and thinking that there must be more to life. Out of the blue, a friend calls with a tantalizing and risky proposal: How would he feel about moving to Bologna to help turn around a legendary, down-on-its-luck Italian motorcycle company, known for its dominance on the track and its inability to turn a profit? After a brief soul-search and popping his first (unintentional) wheelie during his maiden ride on the company's monstrous superbike, he signs on.

And so Gross heads to Bologna, fabled home of marbled meats, radical leftist politics, and bespoke shoes, diving into his new life as the "corporate image consultant" to gearheads and learning to navigate the giddy mores of Bolognese society. He meets the CEO, who can relax only on planes between meetings; the manic, bellicose bike designer, convinced that only his genius can save the company; and the director of the museum, obsessed by the factory's role in World War II. Gross sparks the business's "spectacularization" with sexy ad campaigns starring factory workers who, when not on strike, strut to the espresso machine clad in Versace.

Above all, he falls in love with motorcycles, seduced by speed, and realizes that becoming a better rider means tapping into dormant parts of his self that, as it turns out, were just waiting to be unleashed. And when he picks up a handsome, young—and closeted—skinhead, things really get interesting . . .

In sensuous, hilarious, and wildly entertaining prose, Gross pens a wry yet ecstatic love letter to an uproarious city and its style-obsessed denizens, and to the motorcycle that gave him the freedom to live life at its very fastest.

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