



## *Havana's Kings of the Road*

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**T**he streets of Havana can look like a car museum with automobiles as old as 70 rolling around the city.

On almost every avenue of the city you can spot a 1943 Chevrolet, a 1938 Ford, or a 1956 Buick driving alongside modern vehicles.

The same is true for motorcycles although it is getting harder to see one of those exotic British or American bikes, characterized by their noisy roars and classic designs, that filled Havana's streets more than a half century ago.





In the 1970's, bikers started to gather in different places in Cuba and in 1995 they founded the Cuban Classic Motorbike Club. This group disbanded after the Harley Davidson owners chose to go their separate way. All the different bike owners came together again on February 10, 2002 when they

founded the English Classic Motor Team of Havana (the "EMICCH").

The group's members come from all different backgrounds. There are university students, farmers, doctors, technicians, mechanics, intellectuals, and artists. All of them



completely dedicated to maintaining and preserving their machines.

Enthusiasm and unity characterize the group's meetings on National Traffic Day, the Coffee Party, and when they meet at motorbike or kart racing tracks where lots of people go to admire their machines.

From its unofficial headquarters at the *La Maison* fashion house in the Miramar neighborhood in Havana's west end, the EMICCH promotes understanding among the Cuban owners of old and classic motorbikes and works to preserve their historic value.

Among the makes the members own, there are the

Whizzer, AJS, Ariel, BSA, Matchless, Norton, Panther, Royal Enfield, and Triumph. Of course, there are the noisy Harley Davidsons, the stars for all those who want to ride a bike.

There is a common aspect for all members and their bikes – the care and cleaning. They dazzle with light reflecting from their chrome and painted parts on the streets, rolling or parked in a group all over the city.

It is only the members' fierce desire to preserve these bikes, that in any other circumstances would no longer exist, that let young people today admire the bikes that reigned decades ago and are still alive in Cuba.