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FOR THE ROAD
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CONTINENTS.



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You silly old sod!



Tony Carter

I'm hobbling about a bit at the minute. Putting on or taking off a T-shirt is comically underpinned with various involuntary whimpers or grimaces and for some unfathomable medical reason I can't take Ibuprofen for a while yet so my knackered knee is giving me merry hell.

Welcome to the world of the silly old sod who crashed a motorcycle recently.

I tell you this, crashing really is a young man's game. In 1994 I had a big one that effectively twisted and popped my right leg into a sort of pretzel shape before gravity and inertia glad-handed each other to send me a 100ft or so into a parked police car (it was a difficult day...). The recovery from the fall was intense and thoroughly unpleasant, as you might expect, but the saving grace throughout was that I was a quick healer. Weeks instead of months whisked me through the rehab. Who knew that I bounced so well?

So the years have passed, the motorcycles come and gone and occasionally I've ended up on my backside again. Sometimes you get away with a light beating up in a fall, other times the injury is a touch more serious, it matters not for ultimately what you learn is this: the recovery time goes on almost forever as you get older.

I used to be able to shrug off a fall and just carry on. Stitches, broken fingers etc. would knit within a few days and within the week I'd be riding again without much thought to anything that had needed to be put together by doctors.

But now... sheesh. What a difference. As you will see when you read P49 of this issue, I fell off the new Yamaha R1 Superbike while testing in Australia at the magnificent Eastern Creek circuit. The bike itself is stunning. A real paradigm shift in the art that really (genuinely, really) lets even numpties like moi get to real

Push, lean, throttle, push, bit more, yep, got this... awwww, dammit!

hardcore grips with a Superbike. It's bristling with tech. It's a sheer joy to ride. It's very clever. But my fall showed that even with all that clever stuff, if you ride like an idiot then nothing can save you. What happened was entirely my fault, nothing to do with the bike.

I was riding in a way that used the traction control to basically let me try different things; more throttle aggression, more lean angle etc. But I reached the limit when I rode off the edge of the tyre. The electronics tried their best but there's little they can do without much tyre underneath them.

It happened in a fraction of a second. The embarrassment as my peers rode past a couple of minutes later, thankfully not giving me the hand signal I was fully entitled to, lasted much longer. Still, I'd messed up so nothing more to do than accept the inevitable ribbing with good grace and a smile.

So, I fell off and got a bit beaten up. It happens. I suppose I should be happy for nothing too serious injury-wise and that – in my dotage – I can still bore people with the inflated tale of track-riding heroics after each involuntary whimper that causes the nearby to ask; 'You alright?'

I'd have preferred not to dump it though. Sorry Yamaha, from the silly old sod in the gravel trap.

Have a safe ride

Tony Carter

Tony has been riding for nearly 30 years, in most countries and on most types of bikes. A journalist for nearly 20 years, MSL's editor has written for a host of newspapers including *The Sun*, *The Mirror* and *The Observer*. Formerly head of news at *Motor Cycle News*, he has written for dozens of motorcycle magazines around the world.

Tony Carter Editor

MSL: Meet the Team



Bruce Wilson

MSL's deputy editor started riding aged 10. He's 27 now. Bruce has written for *Motorcycle Racer*, *MCM*, *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* and others, before joining MSL three years ago. He has since tested almost every new bike launched.



Roland Brown

Has ridden for 37 years and been a bike journalist for more than 30. At *Bike* he ended up as deputy editor before going freelance. An author of 11 books, as a racer he was Bemsee 1300 champion 1984 and raced UK F1, Superstock and Superbike, plus World F1 races.



Alan Cathcart

Alan Cathcart has been writing about bikes for over 30 years, and riding them for even longer. He's regularly given the keys to factory prototypes and being on first name terms with the bosses of bike companies around the world allows him to bag many scoops.



Chris Moss

Mossy has raced the Isle of Man TT, dispatched in London and ridden everything from CX500s to full-blown GP prototypes. A former chief motorcycle tester for *Motor Cycle News*, the 53-year-old admits he's still loving two-wheeled life, and still learning.



Malc Wheeler

Malc Wheeler has been riding motorcycles for 50 years, starting before he legally could and no one has been able to stop him since. He raced in the TT for 16 years, collecting three podiums along the way.

MSL May

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ONE TO RIDE

We're stretching the distance a bit here, it's in Australia but it is amazing!

016

MSL MAIL

Your rantings and roarings – and the odd calm point – about being a biker today.

019

DUCATI MULTISTRADA 2015 - WORLD LAUNCH

Desmodromic Variable Timing, 10bhp boost to 160bhp in total and four riding modes to extend usefulness. The new Multistrada is going for the top sales spot in the sports adventure sector. Here's our world launch ride on it.

028

SUZUKI'S V-STROM 650XT - WORLD LAUNCH

More kit and a tweak here and there have upped the venerable middleweight sales king for the 2015 season. We sent our Bruce to Ireland to ride the XT on and off-road.

036

APRILIA CAPONORD - WORLD LAUNCH

A bigger front wheel, 33 litre panniers both sides and retuned traction control with refined ABS for off-road riding. Aprilia has gone to work on the new Caponord to make a good adventure bike even better.

044

YAMAHA'S R1 AND R1-M SPORTBIKES: UNDER THE SKIN

As state-of-the-art as state-of-the-art gets. The pair of track-focused sportbikes from Yamaha share much with the 2011 M1

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MSL TOURING: THE ONE DAY RIDE

Head to Norfolk for a fun day amid the beaches and the thatched petrol pumps. Really.

086

MSL TOURING: THE LONG WEEKENDER

Tomos mopeds, do you remember them? One MSL reader does, and decided to ride a chunk of Espania on one for fun. Yes, we said fun...

KNOWLEDGE

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SECONDHAND BUYER'S GUIDE: THE DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200

The new one's just appeared so what better time to get all knowledgeable up about the older models in the range – should you fancy a bit of secondhand action now the summer's almost here.

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REFLECTIONS: HONDA'S CB900

A bike that came so, so close to being the perfect package – but it never quite made it to the lexicon of the greats. That's a shame because even by today's standards this 1970s behemoth was very good indeed.

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If you can, stop at The Scarborough Hotel for a lunch and take in brilliant fish dishes cooked to order. You sit outside overlooking the landscape

and the atmosphere is like being at a friendly Aussie's private barbecue.

It's a great route that gets better and better with each mile and because the Aussie coppers are numerous and very, very strict about not speeding this is really one of the routes we've ridden that is just a pretty sedate and amazingly relaxing way to enjoy a magnificent part of the world.

Yes, it's a long way to go for a ride. But if you ever find yourself all the way down there with access to a bike then this is one of those terrific, almost unknown routes to ride.

A BELTER FROM DOWN UNDER

Here's an incredible route we've ridden recently, 200 miles-ish of amazing roads through tropical climates in the mighty Oz. Worth knowing.

WORDS: Tony Carter **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Yamaha



WARNING!

- » Always ride carefully and observe the applicable road traffic regulations
- » Always wear appropriate protective clothing and never ride without a helmet
- » All illustrated riding scenes were performed without exception by professionals on closed roads

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HONDA'S NEW AFRICA TWIN

New patent drawings registered in the USA show key areas of design and development on the 1000cc twin.

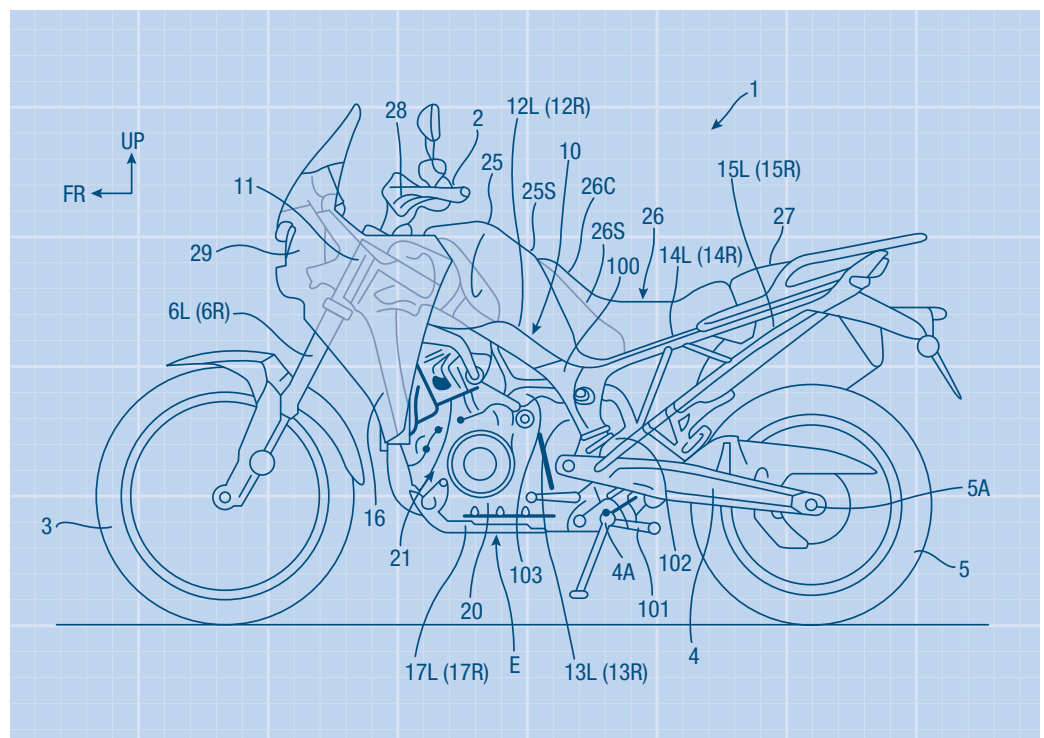
WORDS: Tony Carter

Officially there's no news about when we're likely to see the next generation Africa Twin, but sources inside Honda have told *MSL* that the bike is gearing up to be part of the 2016 line-up.

While that's very exciting in itself, what adds fuel to the off-road fire is this patent drawing filed in America showing serious aspects of the bike. And it looks like we will be getting a final version of the bike that bears a very similar design and layout to the 'True Adventure' concept bike shown at EICMA in Italy last year.

That bike was presented by Honda as an indication of where the company saw the Adventure market going next, but comparing that bike with the patent it's much more likely that what the firm was doing was gauging public interest in the more narrow, more off-road-friendly idea before heading into production.

What we know from the patent application is that the new bike gets a split airbox design. Either part of the airbox sits on each side of the headstock which



This is the drawing that shows what's coming our way next. Serious overtones for serious riding off-road.

means that fuel tank can then sit lower in the frame, keeping the bike very narrow indeed and also helping keep the bike's central mass low. The only reason you'd do this is to make the bike more able off-road.

The bike's twin radiators sit on either side of the engine just below the airboxes, so they'll be

less prone to damage from the front suspension and wheels when riding over extreme terrains.

The bike's seat also gets a split rider and pillion set-up with a special height adjuster system which can move the rider seat up and down independently. But what's extra special is that the front of the seat moves up the petrol tank as the height changes, keeping things level and comfortable – to a point.

In the patents the whole of the bike's fairing is one piece. It's difficult to see how this can stay like that in the final production runs where the cost of producing something as one unit will be

high, it'll also not be popular with customers who will have to replace the whole thing rather than just the odd panel after a fall.

The bike is already getting a lot of interest purely on the back of the sales success and loyalty from previous Africa Twin owners. When the bike was originally launched in 1989 it was in 650cc format but it's Dakar-esque styling quickly won it a large following.

The new bike is clearly going to be 1000cc but is likely to not weigh much different to the original bike's 218kg wet weight. Honda could be on to a winner next year with this one. More for the purists though.



The original Africa Twin – a 650!



The True Adventure concept bike.

Kawasaki's Hi-tech 'history key'

From now all Kawasaki road bike customers in the UK will receive a unique 'history key' with their new bike – which is effectively a digital service history you can carry around in your pocket.

The USB key fob device has been designed to hold essential information such as the motorcycle service history, dealer and customer added notes and any recall information. The system is activated via the internet when you register for free membership of the Kawasaki Riders Club.

The history key is not intended to replace the hard copy service book but, as Mark Spiller of Kawasaki's marketing department explains, to create an easy to access and updateable point of reference: "The basic idea came about as a result of one of our regular dealer seminars.

"It was suggested that something like a USB stick could be a great way for both the dealer and customer to build up a digital history and have all the important information for a given machine in the same place."



Five minutes with: Steve Kenward – chief executive of the MCIA



The Motorcycle Industry Association has been looking after the interests of the motorcycle industry for over 100 years. Chief executive, Steve Kenward, has been in the role since 2008.

MSL: Sales are looking up for bike registrations – but we're far from the days of old. What do you think is holding people back from taking to two wheels?

"Not much actually. I think it's down to the awareness of the opportunity. We can see from the statistics that a lot of

people have taken part in the Get On campaign and the number of people taking CBTs is good. We know that as soon as we put someone on two wheels they want to carry it on but we need to raise awareness of motorcycling and show people the benefits to encourage them."

MSL: Do you think that the industry as whole – from media to dealers and even the staff of the MCIA send out a good enough example about biking?

"You have to be a biker to work at the MCIA. To be honest though, I don't think you can ever do enough. The answer is we could always do more although I'm not quite sure what enough is. If enough means everyone riding their bikes everywhere, then a lot of people in the industry do this already. In terms of the messaging we put out, I think we could always do more. We're probably guilty as an industry of assuming that everyone knows as much as we do and that's a big mistake."

MSL: What could we do?

"We can remind people why they should ride bikes to encourage them onto two wheels. If someone has completed a CBT and then goes on to take their driving test; they are less likely to be in an accident. We could also work to challenge the negative perceptions that other road users have of motorcyclists. I'd also urge those in the industry to work with training centres which have or are undergoing MCIA Accredited Courses. The riders who train with these schools are likely to have a positive initial experience so will want to continue with motorcycling."

MSL: Where do you see motorcycling in 10 years' time?

"Much bigger. There are currently nearly double the number of motorcycles, mopeds and scooters licensed for the road than there were 20 years ago and we see that trend continuing. There will be two distinct camps – leisure and utility. I see the leisure part of our market as core

and this will have grown. The utility part of the market will have grown too with people looking for solutions to congestion. And I believe a proportion of utility riders will then convert to the core 'leisure' market, so it will be bigger, much bigger."

MSL: What effect do you think that budget-priced Chinese bikes have had on the industry?

"They've encouraged people in and that's always a good thing. The quality has progressed satisfactorily and now budget priced doesn't mean poor quality. They have a rightful place in the market supplying the lower end of utility demand. Ten years ago, there were clearly some quality issues but the quality has gone up astronomically with some very strong brands. You get what you pay for though. There will be a huge difference in quality between something that costs £2000 and something that's priced at £400."

MOTORCYCLE ON THE GO! SPORT & LEISURE

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ALL THAT AND PLENTY MORE IN MSL ON SALE MAY 1

Enfield Continental Café Racer now in black

Royal Enfield has now made the Continental GT 535cc café racer available in black. Available to buy from April, it will be priced at £4999 on the road – the same as the yellow and red machines.

The new colour option also features a new tan coloured flat sculpted racing seat, with contrast stitching.

For more information, go to: www.royalenfield.me



Suzuki sponsors the Oliver's Mount Barry Sheene Festival

Suzuki has become the circuit sponsor for Oliver's Mount Race Circuit for the 2015 season and the title sponsor for the Barry Sheene Festival held on June 21.

Oliver's Mount road race circuit is England's only natural 'road' race track. Situated just five minutes from Scarborough's town centre, the races have been likened to a 'miniature TT by the seaside'.

With a racing heritage that dates back to 1946, Oliver's Mount Race Circuit has a rich history of motor racing and has seen many of the great riders race the 2.43 mile track at 'The Mount' over the years.

There are four main events taking place at Oliver's Mount Race Circuit in 2015:



- Spring Cup – April 11-12
- Barry Sheene Festival – June 21
- Cock O'The North – July 18-19
- International Gold Cup – September 12-13

Advance tickets for Oliver's Mount can be bought by calling the ticket hotline on: 01723 373000 or for more information go to: www.oliversmountracing.com

0% finance deals from Piaggio

Piaggio UK has added more of its Aprilia and Moto Guzzi motorcycles and Piaggio scooters to its Freedom Finance brand, following the introduction of 0% APR and other preferential offers.

The Moto Guzzi V7, Aprilia Shiver and Dorsoduro models are available with 0% APR finance over 24 months

following a 40% deposit. Piaggio Zip 50 and Fly 125 scooters are available on a similar scheme with a 30% deposit.

Additionally, the Aprilia RS4 125 is offered with 2.9% APR finance over 24 months and a 30% deposit resulting in a monthly payment that comes in under £138. Riders who prefer to finance their bikes through a

PCP scheme are not forgotten either, with Moto Guzzi Griso, Norge and Stelvio models all available at lower than the usual rates.

But you've got to be quick, all offers are available from now until March 31.

For more information about the offers available, go to: www.uk.piaggio.com

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Time to make some noise?

Leon Mannings



Hoorah and let's all bang gongs! Our roads will be much better managed, maintained and 'improved' from now on. Well that's a key theory behind the Infrastructure Act 2015, that just became law.

On April 1 (no kidding), the Highways Agency will be transformed into the latest thing in privatisation hybrids. The whole caboodle will become a 'private' company... but will be Government owned. This will "hugely boost Britain's competitiveness in transport," according to transport secretary, Patrick McLoughlin.

Nevertheless, I'll give you a couple of nanoseconds to guess what motorcyclists might get from this move. Time's up, and the answer is: a lot less than nothing.

Conditions for motorcycling are likely to worsen, unless key proposals for road 'improvement' schemes are challenged. However, some minority road user campaigners are blowing their own trumpets at full blast to celebrate an 'historic win'.

The highly influential pro-cycling charity Sustrans, is gleefully braying that future transport secretaries must publish plans to expand infrastructure for cycling and walking – as this will "extend travel choice and help ease congestion". Really? Well no, not really. What this really means, in my view, is that many more millions of tax payers' pounds will be spent on hiving off road space for exclusive use by cyclists or pedestrians – even though most schemes will cut space for riders of motorbikes or scooters.

The act also promotes the spread of 'smart motorway' systems. These will cut the efficiency of transport by motorbikes as they basically involve temporary speed limit reductions with loads of CCTV enforcement to 'smooth' traffic flow.

Meanwhile, as regular readers may recall, I spent many months working in a small team of stakeholders and 'experts' drawn together to form a Roads Task Force (RTF). Our job was to propose fresh options for developing roads in the capital in order to cope with an extra two million people in the next two decades.

Strangely enough, one 'new' idea to emerge was that congestion problems in London or any UK city could be cut by new moves to enable more modal shift from cars or vans to Powered Two Wheelers (PTWs). However, the RTF noted that Transport for London (TfL) had spent squillions on investigating the potential for modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport – and nothing on shift to PTWs.

So, the RTF unanimously agreed on a formal 'recommendation' that TfL should investigate the

Some say that those who shout loudest get most, bikers might need to try that...

potential for more PTW usage and current barriers to such progress.

A year down the line, no such work had started so I met the TfL officers in charge of implementing the RTF's recommendations and asked why not. To be fair, TfL's official response to the recommendations made no mention of long overdue research into the potential for decreasing car and van use by switching to mopeds, motorcycles or scooters.

But the reasons I got for not doing so, and deciding that the 'market for modal shift was not sufficient to make further study worth doing' beggar belief. It was claimed that some unpublished analysis had been done – and I was assured I could see it straight away. Five weeks later I got a document had been created that day.

It claimed that only 5% of the 3.7 million trips by car or van per day in London could be feasibly switched to PTW. But that seemed inconceivably odd compared to TfL's 'research' to show that between 1.3m and 1.7m driver trips could be cycled, i.e. 37- 45%. However, a delve into devilish details revealed that the estimate of potential shift to PTWs was drastically cut by excluding millions of trips that might well be switchable.

Excluded trips included the one million a day done to get people or goods in or out of London. Others included all trips involving "delivering something" or carrying "some luggage or equipment". Also ignored were trips by the many millions of commuters per day who are transported in conditions that would be illegal if they were cattle.

Frankly, this sort of 'research' is a biased sham that looks as unacceptable to me as new legislation to push the spending of £millions on schemes that will make motorcycling less efficient and more hazardous. Technically, the new act only specifies that an investment strategy to build such schemes 'may' be set. But it would take a very brave minister to say they won't – with powerful gangs of hardcore cycling zealots breathing down their neck.

All this made me wonder if the time has come for those who believe that motorcycling should be treated more fairly – should start making some noise. In the last few months I put that question privately to some extremely senior transport policy figures, and all said yes. But I also wonder what you think – and if enough positive attention can be drawn to motorcycling before it is quite literally squeezed off policy agendas – and the roads we pay to use.

Who is Mannings?

Leon is MSL's political man. Working within the corridors of power Dr Mannings is consistently on the inside picking up the big political changes and whispers that threaten to change the motorcycle world we all inhabit. Always on the side of the biker, Leon is a hard-edged, educated campaigner for two-wheeled rights and has been hugely influential where it really matters.

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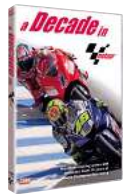
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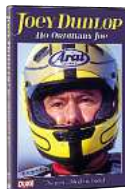


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★ Star Letter

Rocking on, old school

Dear *MSL*,

I was very interested in your report on the XJR1300 in the last issue of the magazine, especially in your opinion how it would fare against much more tech-savvy and modern competition.

I for one am very happy that Yamaha is still putting some faith in the old tech of an air-cooled motorcycle and I hope that this means that the decision makers and money men in the Japanese factories are starting to understand that we don't all want gizmos and needless intervention when we go for a ride.

I am 62 years old and I grew up riding the sorts of motorcycles that would really bite you if you didn't know what you were doing. These days I am more sedate in the way I ride but my skill level, I'd like to feel, has improved so a physically large motorcycle with some decent power and brakes is not anything I think I need help with in an electronic sense.

If somebody asked me what I wanted from a modern bike it would be to just have a motorcycle that had a neutral chassis, was comfortable to ride, enough power and good strong brakes. If I could do some miles on it too that would be very favourable.

So for me that XJR seems like



the right sort of bike. While I appreciate that the air-cooled engine is an old idea I can't for the life me see why it should have run its course when it's so well suited to this sort of motorcycle.

**C Westford
Sussex**

Absolutely right Mr Westford. We at MSL Towers are most definitely not tech snobs and we applaud your thoughts and echo the sentiment 100%.

In fact, we want something like an old featherbed frame (with some flex in it) and modern suspension combined with an old-style American

Dream exhaust system all bolted to something rather rorty.

There's a real joy in riding old-school technology and I truly believe that doing it in this day and age, with that huge plethora of tech-based options available, actually adds to the experience precisely because it really IS just getting back to basics.

Who knows, but this might very well be exactly the route that we see on smaller, more simple motorcycles of the future. It'd be a very shrewd move by whichever motorcycle maker came up with it first.
TC

Yamaha's new plan... some good, some bad

Dear *MSL*,

I was at first appalled when I read the story about Yamaha taking £5750 off the price of a new standard V-Max bike.

That's so much money off the bike that if I'd bought a standard V-Max at that old price I'd seriously never buy another Yamaha because of that price alone.

But then I started realising that because this is all about Yamaha starting off its new pricing plan, something somewhere has to give and I

suppose that because it's the V-Max, which had such a high price to begin with, then it all seems that much more of a shock when the new price was announced.

So, I understand why Yamaha has done it and from now on we will get Yamahas that are priced more favourably for the dealerships and us riders, but I do bet there are a few annoyed 'old' new V-Max out there right now.

**Roger Ward
Email**

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● 17" alloy disc brake

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● Carbon fibre footpegs
● Carbon fibre luggage rack
● Carbon fibre side panels
● Carbon fibre front fender
● Carbon fibre rear fender
● Carbon fibre wheel covers
● Carbon fibre wheel nuts
● Carbon fibre wheel caps
● Carbon fibre wheel bolts
● Carbon fibre wheel studs
● Carbon fibre wheel nuts
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● Carbon fibre wheel bolts
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VMAX CARBON INSIDE SHOTS
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Fixable retro is the way... maybe...

It struck me the other day, as I was reading about some modern machine in *MSL* with electronic everything, that this will be the death of classic bikes. Once the electronics pack up, game over. The manufacturer won't be able to supply the original parts, as with PCs the designs change every few years, to keep up with improvements. So, in 20 years' time, unless you can retro-fit a new computer to your now-vintage Ducati Multistrada, and programme all the variables, that's yer lot.

This idea was prompted by a mate, when I was musing at an air show, as to why there are so few post-Second World War jet airplanes still flying. The odd

Sabre jet or Buccaneer, but I'm guessing those were old-fashioned stick-and-wire controls; definitely no Phantoms. How long until the last Harrier leaves the sky? Whereas a Second World War plane made of wood and fabric with carburettors can continue for ever.

This may be why I hanker for an old carburetted Guzzi, with solid-state electronic ignition at its most basic. At least I can fix it. The Can-Bus wired BMW will have to go. The fuel-injected Brevia 11 may stay, if I can get a laptop to talk to it. We'll see...

Cheers,
Adrian Orrom
Email



Two sides of the same coin? Really?

Dear *MSL*,

So, according to your test rider the KTM 1290 Super Adventure and the 1050 Adventure are just adjusted versions of the 1190. I'm sorry, but how can that possibly be correct?

One is a 160bhp beast of a bike and the other makes less than 100bhp and has been built specifically to appeal to more timid types of rider such as newly qualified or older bikers. That's two completely different motorcycles that use only the very base of parts from the original machine. Even the tyre sizes are different.

When your test rider says things as silly as this please remind them that they're riding the bikes on our behalf and should be paying attention rather than just repeating whatever it is they heard somebody say in a bar late at night.

Alan Hiscott
Rutland

Hello Alan, thanks for this very enlightening letter. It was me who was the rider and writes reports for these motorcycles and while normally I wouldn't rise to the bait, on this occasion I

feel that I should, mainly because both of these bikes ARE versions of the 1190 Adventure from KTM, they use the same engine with bore and stroke altered. That was the original bike which effectively gave birth to both the 1290 and 1050, hence why I said that in the report. Yes, I will admit that the sheer amount of tech on the 1290 really moves it far, far away from the 1050 (and the 1190 come to think of it) but there's no denying that these bikes are genetically linked.

What that means in the real world is that you can have the pared-down simplicity of the 1050 without the, for some riders, overbearing power of the 1190 or the 1290 or you can go and grab the 1290 and blow your mind in sumptuous quality.

You're right about hearing a lot of things on a launch in the bar at the end of the job before we fly back to Blighty, but it's usually just scandal about other test riders... and it'd be unfair to print that - unless you want to hear the gossip, of course?
TC



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[‡] Included in Final Repayment.



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scramblerducati.com

Ducati Multistrada 1200

NEXT GENERATION

Adventure bikes don't come any more sophisticated than Ducati's new Multistrada 1200s. Welcome to the future.

WORDS: John Milbank PHOTOGRAPHY: Milagro

Everything is new on the 2015 Multistrada, including the chassis. It's the usual (lovely) tubular steel trellis frame, but the geometry has been nipped and tucked for comfort. Weight distribution is apparently almost 50/50, and like the previous model, rider and pillion are kept within the wheelbase for the most stable ride. There are four-pot monobloc radial calipers biting 310mm discs on the standard 1200, but the 1200S gets the 330mm discs and Brembo Evo M50 four-pots from the Panigale 899. Then there are the electronics... both the 1200 and 1200S have the full Ducati Safety Pack of Bosch's 9ME cornering ABS, traction and wheelie control.



Specification

DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200

Engine: 1198.4cc Testastretta with Desmodromic Variable Timing, liquid cooled 90° V-twin

Power: 160bhp @ 9500rpm

Torque: 100.3 lb-ft @ 7,500 rpm

Wet weight: 232kg

Seat height: 825mm or 845mm

Fuel capacity: 20 litres

Contact: www.ducati.co.uk

These are all fed by the new Inertial Measurement Unit – a variation on the same Bosch brain used in the Panigale, as well as the new KTMs and Yamaha R1. It looks at roll, yaw, and longitudinal, transverse and vertical acceleration, then compares the data with wheel speed and other parameters to determine the bike's lean and pitch angle.

The 1200S also uses this to help control the Ducati Skyhook Suspension (DSS) – a semi-active system that adjusts front and rear damping, along with the rear preload. DSS featured on the 2013 Multistrada 1200S, but new software, a rear travel sensor and the IMU refine the system and add more control to the damping in corners. The braking system is combined, but only from front to rear – a conscious decision by Ducati as having the front brake operated by the rear pedal was not considered suitable for Ducati's sporty ethos. On to the engine. Desmodromic Variable Timing (DVT) makes this the first bike with double continuously variable camshaft timing. It's all about valve overlap... put simply, having the exhaust valve open while the inlet opens can increase power at high revs. But at low revs that makes for lumpy low-speed running. There's usually a compromise, as in the new Ducati Scrambler, which has a reduced overlap to improve city-speed riding, with the side-effect of lower peak performance. Timing belts drive two cogs in each head from the crankshaft. All very standard, but those cogs are connected to the camshafts by rotating, oil-filled 'cam phasers'. When oil from the engine is pumped in via solenoids, the relative position of each camshaft to the outer cog can be altered by 22.5° in 0.45 seconds.

Cam timing is actually referred to by crankshaft rotation, so as the cams rotate at half the speed of the crank, there's the potential for a timing change of 45° of crankshaft rotation. The scrambler has 11° of valve overlap,



while the first Multistradas had 41°. With DVT operating on both cams, there's a potential timing phase change of almost zero (smooth), right up to 90° (fast). If that's made your head ache, then just know that it gives a 10bhp and 8lb-ft increase, with a homologation-tested 8% drop in fuel consumption. Clever stuff, but what's really impressive is how it smooths out the characteristically lumpy vee, as I experienced when testing the new model around the stunning island of Lanzarote. The snatch usually associated with these engines is much reduced; when pulling away it feels strange at first, as if the power's not there, but it's all just brought gracefully under control.

To meet Euro 4 legislation, the engine covers are internally ribbed to prevent them resonating – acting like a speaker or drum – and they're packed with sound-deadening rubber. Sadly, the EU party-poopers have imposed a clunky fuel-tank vapour box on the left of the engine (as seen for a while on US bikes), and reflectors on the forks. Both these changes had to be made at the last minute, so missed the opportunity to be incorporated into the otherwise stunning design process.

With 8lb-ft more torque and 15bhp more than a Monster 1200S, the Multistrada could be a daunting proposition. But it's not. It's easy to ride, it's comfortable, and it's really

bloody fast! There are three bikes to choose from: the 1200 at £12,995; the 1200S at £15,595 (or £200 more for white paint); and the 1200S D:Air, which includes the electronic Dainese air-bag system (price is to be confirmed). I rode the 1200S before the standard model, and I must admit that at first it felt slightly underwhelming. All the electronic genius of the bike took away some of the immediacy of the powerful engine – it seemed a bit breathless pulling away from a standstill, and far less aggressive than I imagined a 160bhp Ducati to be.

I had the bike in the touring riding mode; delivering all the power, but with a smoother throttle response than the 'Sport' mode. Switching over increased the rear preload and gave a noticeably sharper throttle response

ABOVE: The Multistrada has a great riding position; it's easy to live with over lots of miles and the screen is terrifically useful. Impeccable manners on road lead to great riding experiences whenever you head out for a run.





The Multistrada inspires huge confidence on the road. It's a masterpiece of engineering

MARCO SAIRU

Head of Engine Project Management



MSL: How did the idea for DVT develop?

MS: Cam Phasers are used in passenger cars – this is a similar system, though they tend to have the oil control valve integrated differently. Separating the valve allowed us to have a more compact cylinder head. Thanks to Desmo we had the possibility to further reduce the dimension of the phaser, because the Desmo requires less torque to move the valves [due to there being no valve springs].

When we started tuning our engine for the first Multistrada, we wanted to improve the stability of the combustion and the smooth response, and it was something that was done step by step, but basically the first big step was reducing the overlap from a fixed value of 41° to the Testastretta's 11°. Then we had

the benefits of the secondary air, dual spark, and the position of the injectors, but this was not enough for us, so the other possibility was to go lower with the overlap – reducing from 11° to almost zero, but this would bring the side effect of also lowering the performance of the engine. So we decided to adapt cam phasers from passenger cars to our engine and take out the fixed constraint, to let the engine work from almost no overlap to be smooth, up to superbike levels of overlap to get both benefits.

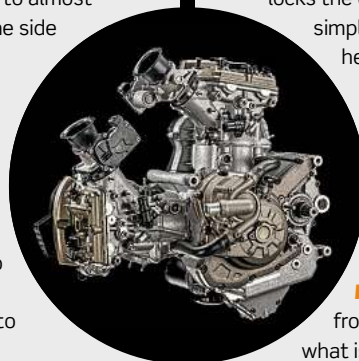
MSL: Does the DVT add to the maintenance costs of the Multistrada?

MS: The system goes into a 'parked' position under around 2000rpm, and every

time you switch off the engine. As a failsafe, this means it defaults to the least overlap for a smooth engine, but it is also useful for maintenance as the system locks the cog to the cam, making it simple to set the timing and hence the valve clearances – it creates no more work for the mechanics.

MSL: How have you kept the distinctive Ducati sound with more regulation coming in?

MS: The sources for the noise from a Euro 4 point of view are what is coming from [a combination of] mechanical noise, intake noise and the exhaust. We worked on lowering the mechanical noise as much as possible, in order to let the other two be higher – this is the Ducati sound.





Closest Rival

APRILIA CAPONORD RALLY 1200

Aprilia's £14,134 Caponord Rally has a 1.4cc smaller V-twin, delivering 123bhp @ 8250rpm and 85lb-ft@6800rpm. It, too, has semi-active suspension, traction control and ABS, though lacks the higher-spec cornering control of the Multistrada. Often overshadowed by the likes of BMW and KTM, the Rally, with its 840mm seat height, has a large 19" front wheel, which tends to have a slower turn-in speed, keeping the bike stable in bumpy corners. With all its adventure kit it weighs 252kg, though the standard bike is a lighter 214kg.

The £11,899 MV Agusta Stradale gains one cylinder, but loses 600cc over the Ducati. Both are a similar weight, though the Stradale delivers 115bhp@11,000rpm and 58lb-ft@9000rpm, with a taller 870mm seat.

BMW's S 1000 XR starts at £12,400, and also makes 160bhp (though at 11,000rpm), with 83lb-ft at 9250rpm. It's got cornering ABS, stability control and traction control.

(Urban and Enduro modes reduce power to 100bhp, with a very pronounced change in feel).

Still, though, I didn't feel completely connected to the bike – there were a few times in the first hour or so of riding that I wasn't sure what was happening with the machine, not helped by a couple of moments that I felt the engine change its behaviour slightly. This is ironic really, as I was riding faster than I usually do this early on a press launch. At one point I glanced down and saw some silly numbers on the speedo; they were in kmh, but when I worked out what they were in mph, they were still silly. And that's the point really – the technology is working. I've never ridden something with this much tech, and the Skyhook's ability to smooth the squatting under hard acceleration, to allow you to feel un-ruffled as the pace picks up and the surface gets worse helps the Multistrada make you a better rider. But don't forget that Ducati has given complete control over every variable in each of the four riding modes (with default settings always easily accessible). If you want the ABS to be less aggressive, you can. If you feel the need to disable the wheelie control (or adjust it so the

front wheel goes higher) you can. It's not a matter of putting up with technology interfering with your ride, it's more a case of raising your expectations. And who would really complain of technology that stops the bike from standing up if you need to brake mid-turn?

I did have one issue with the ride-by-wire system – exiting two corners the traction control took over with lights flashing on the dash and the power drastically reduced. A combination of sand on the road and poor throttle control? Maybe, but I reported it to Marco Sairu – Head of Engine Project Management – that evening, who told me that while they did suspect the roads were sometimes deceptively slippery, another journalist had experienced it, and the data from the bikes had already been sent to Bologna for analysis. He thought that the traction control may occasionally have been acting too aggressively, but that the fix would be simple. It's what launches can be for; ironing out the little unexpected glitches before a bike hits the market. And of course, software can be very quickly updated.

The engine has been raised to improve ground clearance when off-road, but that increase in centre-of-

EXHAUST

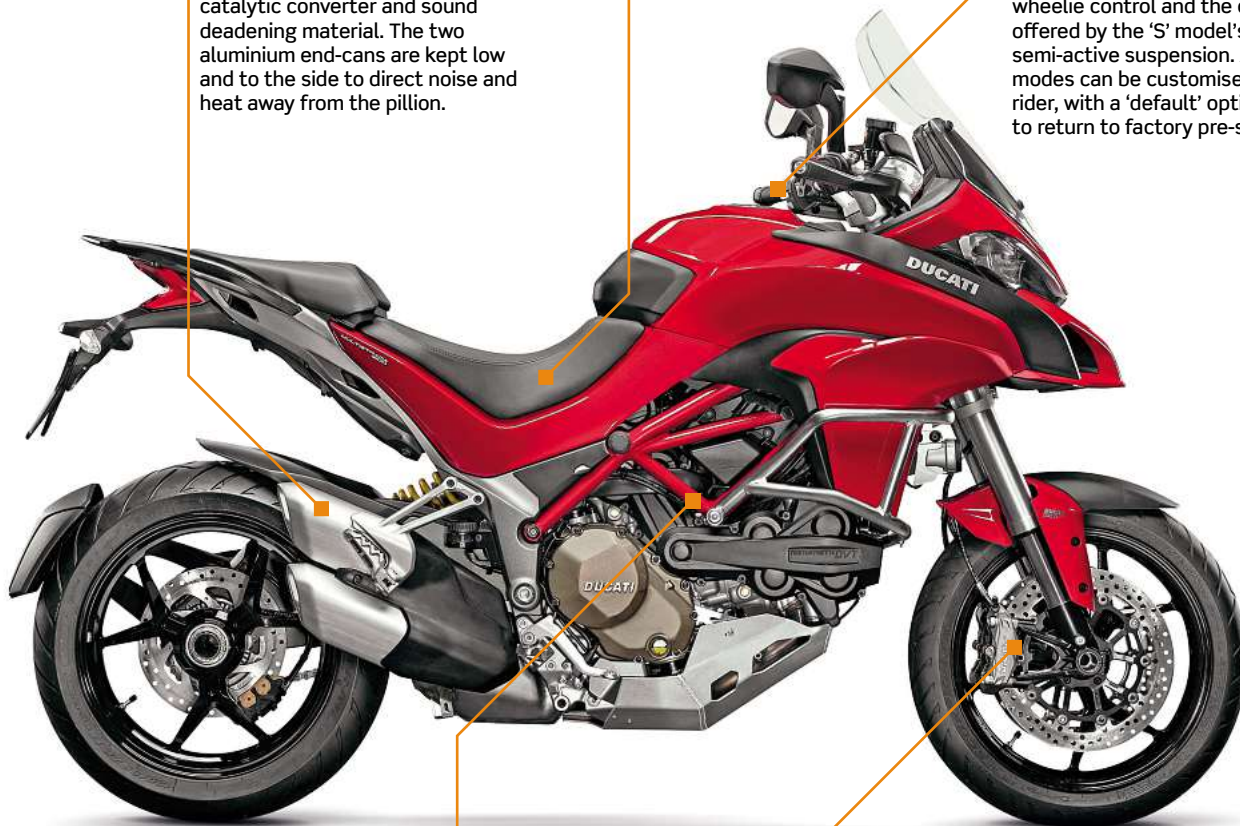
The two heads feed directly into a single, three-chamber silencer, acting as a two-into-one-into-two collector that includes the catalytic converter and sound deadening material. The two aluminium end-cans are kept low and to the side to direct noise and heat away from the pillion.

ADJUSTABLE SEAT

The bike has separate seats for rider and pillion, with the former adjustable as standard from 825mm to 845mm.

RIDING MODES

Four riding modes – Urban, Touring, Sport and Enduro – are selectable via the left-hand switchgear. Each affects power delivery, traction control, ABS, wheelie control and the damping offered by the 'S' model's Skyhook semi-active suspension. All four modes can be customised to suit the rider, with a 'default' option available to return to factory pre-sets.



ENDURO PACK (£950)

Designed for dirt riding, with Touratech engine, radiator and sump protectors, off-road footpegs, additional LED lights and an enlarged side-stand base.



TOURING PACK (£950)

Includes side panniers with a total capacity of 58 litres, heated grips (with three levels) and a centre-stand.



SPORT PACK (£950)

Comes with a road-legal carbon-fibre Termignoni silencer, carbon-fibre front mudguard and machined aluminium brake and clutch fluid reservoir covers.



URBAN PACK (£560)

Features a 48-litre top-box, semi-rigid tank bag and a USB hub power outlet.

CORNERING ABS

The Ducati Safety Pack is standard on the Multistrada, featuring the Bosch 9ME cornering ABS and Ducati's traction control (both of which can be adjusted or turned off). Traditionally, ABS systems haven't worked in corners, as the rolling radius of the tyre decreases. Bosch has overcome that, preventing the front 'tucking under', even during very hard braking and at large angles of lean. It also helps to stop the bike from 'standing up' when braking in a bend, and distributes braking pressure between to stop as quickly and safely as possible.



Ducati's digital dash is the best in the business by miles.

gravity doesn't spoil the ride quality – on the Tarmac, the bike turns in easily, holds its line well, and feels stable when accelerating hard. On the dirt, its small-for-off-road 17in wheel doesn't feel the best when you catch a rut, but it works, with the S version also winding the preload up to max when the enduro mode is selected.

Like most adventure bikes, the Multistrada is unlikely to see much mud, but there's capability enough for the times that the Tarmac ends. Riding the standard bike – without Skyhook – I felt more at home. All the ride-by-wire technology is the same, but the more 'natural' feedback of traditional suspension put me at ease; I preferred it. Until I got back on the S model, where I realised I was slightly faster again on the Lanzarote roads. Once I'd accepted that the Multistrada's technology was a compliment to my own ability, not a hindrance, we gelled a lot more. The screen is brilliant, being easily adjustable with one hand and just the right size for my average height. The bike's a wonderful place to sit; roomy for both rider and pillion, and the DVT makes for a smooth, unflustered ride, but still with a staggering ability to blast past traffic or hack through corners in an instant.

The Multistrada inspires huge confidence on the road. As a bike to ride across any surface, in any conditions, and at any speed, it's a masterpiece of engineering, but still with the style and character that I love about Ducatis.

I also love the wealth of technology on these bikes, which makes the job of choosing the right model a bit of a challenge. The main benefits of opting for the pricier 1200S are the semi-active suspension and full-colour dash, which includes the Ducati Multimedia System – you can control telephone calls and music streaming, as well as get text message notifications; all from the bike's display. There's also an app on the way that lets you record the route and performance data, then save or share it. The S gains full LED headlights, with one lamp on each side illuminating as the bike leans, brightening the inside of corners more effectively. The uprated Evo brakes won't really make a lot of difference to most riders, but the extra tech is likely to appeal; 80% of buyers chose the higher spec in previous years.

Interestingly, the DVT - which is fitted on all models types - doesn't add to the bike's maintenance costs – the system 'parks' the cams to make valve clearance checks simple, so you can expect servicing to be around the same as a Monster at about 1.5 hours for a typical service, and 5.5 hours for the biggest. Great news for a motor which is likely to see big miles clocked up by its owners. It also goes to reiterate how well thought out the new bike is. Despite being really technologically advanced, the guys in Bologna haven't made it a difficult machine to live with on a daily basis. That's good news for everyone. And another big reason why I rate this bike as a super tourer.



GIANFELICE MARASCAO Senior Designer

Gianfelice has worked at Ducati for three years; all on Multistrada. He was previously at Honda in Rome for 12 years, creating the first CBF600, the Hornet facelift and the previous model of SH300



MSL: How did the Multistrada's design evolve?

GM: The previous design was a success, so we tried to keep some of the characteristics; the beak, the intakes... when we started, we already knew the bike would have the new engine, so we took things like the fluidity and smooth character of that, and incorporated it into the design. We tried to match the design to the engine spec.

Then there is some of the family feeling; with the Panigale for example, the line of the headlight is similar, and also the tail-light. We don't show any screws or bolts on the body, to reflect the clean Euro 4 character of the engine.

Then we pay a lot of attention to the ergonomics, that's why the centre of the bike is so slim, and the front is wider to protect from the wind. To make the bike wider was easy, but to make it slimmer wasn't. The head of the engine is wider now, and we moved it up, but the seat came down.

MSL: What do you see as the closest competitor?

GM: I think probably the BMW XR1000, or perhaps the GS, but basically there is not another bike that can do all those things in this way.

MSL: Will you make a more off-road dedicated Multistrada?

GM: We would like to keep the Multistrada, so if we did it would be a different model.

MSL: Where does the Multistrada sit within Ducati's sales?

GM: It is just behind the Panigale; the Multistrada is more of a 360° bike, whereas the Panigale represents the dream. It depends on the market.



The Ducati to tackle all things; they call this a 360 bike.



Thomas Berglund is a long way from Sweden. But he never leaves home without Halvarssons

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V-Strom XT

Giving you XTra

The little V-Strom was always a stromer of a bike. Suzuki's new XT version adds more welly to the package for 2015.

WORDS: Bruce Wilson PHOTOGRAPHY: James Wright





The V-Strom 650XT could handle this sort of stuff pretty easily without panic.

A fifth of all Suzukis sold in Britain last year were from the V-Strom family. Globally, the duo of the 650cc and 1000cc models have proven a huge success, singlehandedly changing the fate of the Japanese manufacturer, which is now back in profit after many years in the red. It's great news for the industry giant, which is set to release seven new models in 2015, including the V-Strom 650XT you see before you.

If it looks familiar, it should. It is an evolution of the standard V-Strom 650, which arrived on the scene back in 2013. But now it's had an adventure themed facelift which has seen the introduction of several new components including an enduro style peak mudguard, handguards, a sumpguard, crash bars and some super-tough spoked wheels. Why? Suzuki's answer is that it sees a gap in the market for such a motorcycle.

"We decided to offer people a middleweight model which could cope with much more punishing terrain," explained Suzuki GB's product planner Steve Hacklett. He was one of the key people responsible for making the 650 more utilitarian, believing that the brand would be able to strengthen its grasp on the growing adventure sector with such a machine. "The standard bike's been very popular for us.

We sold around 400 of them in the UK last year, but we anticipate the combined sales of the new XT and standard V-Strom to achieve even higher figures in 2015," said Steve, who's anticipating 200 sales of the standard version and 300 of the XT this season. A 25% rise in sales is something that can't be frowned upon. And the same should be said about the potential of this new model.

Having spent very little time on the standard V-Strom 650, taking the XT out on a 120 mile loop on the south-west coast of Ireland proved a fantastically rewarding experience.

Despite strong winds, snow and constant lashings of rain, the six hour jaunt around the Ring of Kerry proved a real eye opener. If you're familiar with the V-Strom you'll know all about its comfortable riding position, which seemed to suit all the different shapes and sizes of us journalists sampling the product. Lots of legroom, sensibly placed bars and a broad and long saddle won praise from everyone. As did the substantial windscreen, which kept the worst of the weather away from us as we headed our way along the breathtaking Gap of Dunloe.

Tight and narrow roads were the order of the day, which also allowed plenty of chance to try out the bike's agility. Despite new wheels and the other additional components, the model's suspension is unchanged from



the standard bike's. Which is a good thing, because the package works really well. The model looks far lardier than it really is, proving more than capable of slicing its way along the tightest of bends, including uphill hairpins – of which there were plenty.

The V-Strom XT is a commendably stable package, which works well with its neutral riding position to inspire the rider to push harder without ever taking you out of your comfort zone. It rolls into bends with ease, holds a line well and responds positively when you get on the gas and drive out of corners.

At just 68bhp, the power on tap from the bike's V-twin motor is hardly unnerving. Wringing its neck on wet roads never once led to any moments

ABOVE: Predictable and easy to ride into corners – and it tracks the line well. 68bhp isn't a lot of power by today's standards but it means a less fraught time of riding in these sort of conditions than you might have on something bigger.

of concern, while riding the bike on a remote Atlantic beach proved the ultimate test to assess the engine's linear delivery.

Riding on dual-purpose Bridgestone Battle Wing tyres, traction was surprisingly hard to break. And when the bike was sliding, the commendable connection from the throttle to the rear wheel meant that it was always easy to determine exactly what was going on beneath you.

Taking on a few river crossings and riding over rocks also proved the perfect chance to put the XT's new wheels to the test. Suzuki acknowledged the standard cast wheels on the V-Strom 650 limited its versatility. The same can't be said for

the new steel-spoked items, which sit on light but strong alloy rims. I actively went looking for potholes to hit or rocks to climb. No matter what went under the 19in front, 17in rear combination, I had no problems with durability throughout the course of the test. It most certainly proved it was up for whatever I could throw at it.

For typical green lane work, the XT is undoubtedly well suited. Even in the crashing department! Unfortunately, one of my colleagues came a cropper during the day, but the bike's protective crash bars meant that very little damage was done to the bike; it was picked back up and ridden away with just a few scuffs to show for it. And while we weren't smashing our way

Specification

SUZUKI V-STROM 650XT

Engine: 645cc, liquid-cooled, V-twin

Peak power: 68bhp @ 8800rpm

Peak torque: 44lb-ft @ 6400rpm

Transmission: 6 speed

Wheels: (F) 110/80 x 19
(R) 150/70 x 17

Wheelbase: 1560mm

Kerb weight: 215kg

Fuel capacity: 20 litres

Seat height: 835mm

Contact: www.suzuki-gb.co.uk





GREAT COMFORT

Riders can opt for a low or high seat option on the spacious XT. Likewise, the bike's large windscreen can be adjusted between three different positions to ensure the optimum level of comfort for the user.

DYNAMIC LOOK

A peaked nose cowl gives the XT an aggressive and adventurous look. Suzuki says the idea was inspired by the brand's DR-Z 1988 Paris-Dakar models. From a practical perspective, it offers greater protection to the rider and the core of the machine from debris.



FUEL ECONOMY

The XT's motor is unchanged from the standard model, which is well-known for its strong fuel economy. Tests have proven that the middleweight adventure bike can return up to 71mpg, meaning there's the potential to get a substantial amount of miles ridden between filling up the bike's 20 litre tank.

ADVENTURE SPEC

The new XT is based on the core of the standard V-Strom 650. But additions including an aluminium sumpguard, handguards, engine crash bars and super strong spoked wheels mean that the XT is far more capable of tackling tough off-road terrain.



Powerful-looking bash plate really adds to the aesthetic.





through hedgerows to test the durability of the handguards, I can still confirm that they did a top job of keeping the freezing cold wind and rain from reaching the core of our hands. Add to this equation the bike's three-stage heated grips and I'd go as far as to say that I felt pretty cosy out in the elements.

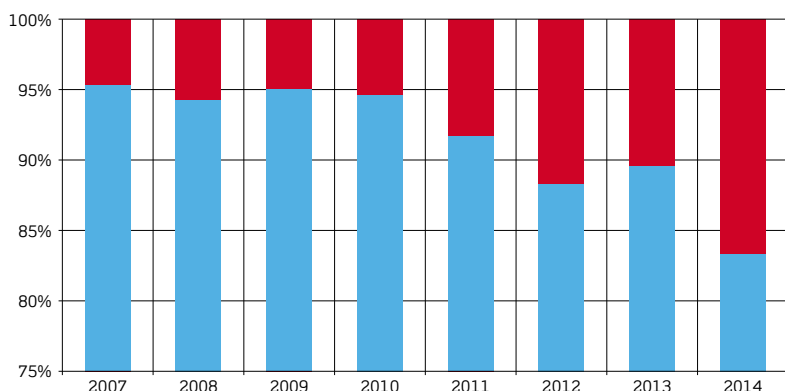
My only criticism of the package is the niggly challenge of adjusting the span of the front brake lever. Before the ride commenced, I spent a couple of minutes trying to move the lever inwards by turning the dial. But the inside of the covers run super close to the turn dial, which meant I had to

take my gloves off and fettle around a bit more to get the set-up I was after. A small thing, but worth being aware of.

Otherwise, I really did struggle to find anything unpleasant about the XT. It's a good, simple and comfortable bike to ride. And its sensible pricing is undoubtedly going to do it a few favours. A new XT will set you back £7499, with the standard bike retailing at £6899. Both models come with good finance offers over two years, making the options even more attractive. If you like what you've seen, you'll be glad to know that the XTs will be in dealerships from the beginning of March. Get yourself along for a test ride.

Retail sales %

■ Suzuki ■ V-Strom



Closest rival



KAWASAKI VERSYS 650 - £6749

For 2015 there's a new middleweight Versys, sporting a new look and a new focus. Unlike the XT, the Versys has switched to a more road bias nature. Physically speaking, it's a very similar sized product to the XT and its parallel-twin motor makes similar kind of power.

It weighs one kilogram less and the seat height is just 5mm taller. And the similarities don't stop there. Albeit a firmer feeling bike, the riding position of the Versys is not dissimilar to the XT, albeit the leg angle is slightly more acute on the sportier Kawasaki.

It's a great machine for blasting around on, but far less suited for off-road life, lacking the protection and spoked wheels that the Suzuki offers. Price wise, the standard Versys will set you back £6749. And that price includes ABS as standard. Not a bad package at all.

Steve Hacklett - Suzuki GB product planner



A quick chat with Suzuki's Steve Hacklett shone a light on the significance of the new V-Strom 650XT, while also painting a broader picture of Suzuki's commercial status.

CAN CURRENT V-STROM 650 OWNERS RETROFIT XT COMPONENTS?

You would have to change quite a few parts to do so, but it is physically possible. The wheels will slot straight in, but the front cowl on the XT would need a few panels switching to fit the new peak.

The rest of the items will bolt straight on. But right now we don't have such a parts kit for people to purchase. We might offer one in the future, but that's not something I can confirm at present.

WHY DOES THE UK SPECIFICATION XT DIFFER FROM THE GLOBAL PRODUCT?

The introduction of the V-Strom 650XT is big news around the world. But here at Suzuki GB, we recognised the potential to make the new model even more suitable and attractive to the British market.

The addition of handguards, a sumpguard and crash bars means that the XT is both

visually and physically more appealing to UK customers, who want a more utilitarian product than many of the other nations that will receive the model.

HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THE V-STROM FAMILY TO SUZUKI?

It's massively important to us. Almost a fifth of all Suzukis sold in the UK last year were from the V-Strom family.

In fact, we actively associate the introduction of the V-Strom 1000 last year as being the catalyst which saw the motorcycle side of the company return to profit. That information alone should help you to appreciate the model's worth to us.

IS THERE ROOM TO EXPAND THE V-STROM FAMILY?

Yes, I think so. I could see us potentially introducing all-new V-Strom models or advancing existing models, as we've just done with the new V-Strom 650XT.

The adventure sector is massively important for all manufacturers, and we for one want to ensure we're firmly embedded in the popular genre.

With this in mind, it makes sense for us to look at what opportunities arise within the many sub-sectors that sit under the adventure umbrella.

SO IS IT LIKELY WE'LL SEE AN XT SPEC V-STROM 1000?

The mechanical opportunity is there should we wish to go down that route. But it's not really a priority for us right now. We recognise the potential of such a model, but we have a lot of bikes in our range and we are committed to progressing down the best path for both our customers and our company. We pride ourselves on making good, well considered decisions as far as model development goes.

The delivery of the V-Strom 650XT might prompt demand from customers for an equivalent specification 1000XT. Should this be the case we'll put a proposal forward to our headquarters in Japan and await their decision on whether to build it.

HOW IS SUZUKI FARING ON THE MOTORCYCLE SIDE?

Last year was a turning point for Suzuki motorcycles. After 2008 there was a real shift in focus for the company from the European market to the Asian sector. But, as the situation has improved in the West, we've seen a notable reinvigoration in Europe.

Last year was our most successful year for a long time and we intend for our success to continue. That's why we're releasing seven new models to the European market in 2015.



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Aprilia Caponord

RALLYING TO SUCCEED

Aprilia's new Caponord Rally gets the adventure treatment, as well as a bolder image, making it a real rival in the popular travel sector.

WORDS: Nathan Milward PHOTOS: Aprilia





Great bikes don't always make great sellers. That's certainly been the case for the second-generation Aprilia Caponord.

Launched in the spring of 2013, the bike was immediately overshadowed by the new liquid-cooled BMW R1200 GS and KTM 1190 Adventure. Not that the Caponord was necessarily a direct rival to such bikes. In a sense, that was half the bike's problem: What was it, and who was it made for?

The small screen and low-capacity integrated panniers weren't really suited to touring. Equally, the 17in front wheel and road tyres meant that it was never going to feature on the radar of those looking for something more rugged either.

It was a true shame, as the Caponord Travel Pack (as the top-spec model was known) handled beautifully and the electronic suspension – adjusting on the move for preload and damping – made the bike one of the most controlled and precise rides in its class. But the model simply lacked a clear identity, and that, hopefully, is what Aprilia has rectified with this, the Rally Edition.

The biggest change is the front wheel size. That might sound trivial but in fact it's made all the difference. Rather

than the 17in of the standard bike, the new Rally's front wheel circumference increases to 19. The wheels are also now spoked rather than cast, with a reduction in tyre width at the rear, down from 180 to 170.

Tyres are now dual-sport inspired Metzeler Tourance Next tyres. Not only do the changes transform the look of the bike – the larger front wheel giving better visual balance, front to rear – but, as we found later, it also transforms the bike's personality on the road.

In addition to the changes to the wheel, the bike also gets tubular engine guards, a bash plate for the sump, a taller and wider screen, LED spotlights and the colour-coded panniers of the Travel Pack have been replaced by rebranded aluminium-coated 33-litre Givi Trekkers, which, all-in-all, add up to give the bike a whole new appearance.

What's also worth pointing out is just how much easier, and more effective it is, to apply panniers to a bike with low-slung exhaust as in the case here, removing the need for the exhaust side pannier to be narrower than the other. It certainly looks a lot neater and better balanced, aesthetically at least.

As well as the wheels and other

addenda, the Rally also benefits from three new colours, unique to the bike. They are Dune (yellow), Safari (grey) and Army (green), with no option to order the Rally in the flat red, black and white of the regular Travel Pack model. The entry-level model – without the ADD suspension – has now been discontinued in the UK. For the press launch the bikes were all painted in the striking Dune colour.

The rest of the Rally is the same as the regular Caponord. It uses the same 1197cc 90° V-twin engine, itself a derivative of the Dorsoduro 1200 engine with 6000-mile service intervals, same trellis frame as the original bike of 2013 and same 690W generator – handy for powering all those electrics.

The clever Aprilia Dynamic Damping electronic suspension is also the same, employing semi-active technology to automatically adjust preload and damping on the move.

You can set the preload manually, between solo rider, rider with luggage, rider with pillion, and rider with pillion and luggage, but the system – unlike on the ESA-equipped R1200 GS – doesn't allow you to tailor the damping for different moods or paces. Leave it in auto and head for the hills; that's the thinking with this bike.

Specification

APRILIA CAPONORD RALLY

Price: £14,134

Engine: 1197cc, liquid-cooled 90° V-twin

Peak power: 123bhp @ 8000rpm

Peak torque: 85lb-ft @ 6800rpm

Kerb weight: 238kg

Seat height: 840mm

Tank size: 24 litres

Contact: uk.aprilia.com



Single-screen dash is fashionable.

MARCO ZULIANI: APRILIA PRODUCT MANAGER



A sit down with Aprilia's product manager offered the chance for MSL to ask more about this latest addition to the Caponord family.

WHEN DID THE RALLY EDITION COME ABOUT?

We had in our mind the Rally version ever since we started working on the first version of the Caponord.

WHY HAS IT TAKEN TWO YEARS TO RELEASE IT?

The decision we had to make was whether we came out with the standard and Rally models at the same time, or whether to stagger them. At that point we thought it more appropriate for the Aprilia brand to enter the market with a

new enduro bike that was a bit more road oriented and a bit more, let me say, sporty. So focus on a more sporty kind of rider.

Now is the right time for us to release the Rally version. We are expanding the potential customer base to a more extended range of people and riders, because we have added versatility to the bike with the 19in wheel.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE TWO MODELS WILL BE CONSIDERED?

Despite their similarities, they are two different products.

They are unique enough to each attract their own kind of rider; being defined by those who prefer the sportier experience and those who seek real adventure. They are different and we expect they will appeal equally to our customers.





The Caponord was surprisingly good off road, even more off road than this...

The test route was 140km in length, much of it along the coastal roads to the south-east of the island. Having rained in the night, as well as during breakfast, the roads were wet and winding, though drying rapidly as the morning progressed. At the end of the test route a seven-mile stretch of dirt track awaited, with Aprilia keen to impress on us this bike's new-found fondness for the road less travelled, though to be frank; any talk of this being an off-road capable machine is nonsense.

Like many of the rest, it's a road bike, masquerading as an enduro machine, but that, clearly, is what everyone assumes the market desires. On start up the bike is rather mute, with no noticeable growl or rumble. The bars are generously wide and sit comfortably ahead of you, not elevated as they are on a GS for example.

The seat height, at just 840mm, makes touching down with both feet a possibility for most people, and apart from a heavy tug to lift it from its side stand (no centre stand available for the Rally as yet), the bike feels relatively light between your knees. The only grunt needed is in operation of the clutch lever, which is a touch on the firm side, but adaptable to after a short while.

The controls are nicely laid out. On the right handlebar you have buttons for cruise control, heated grips and a rocker switch for adjustment of riding mode. Cruise control comes as standard but needs further development as dipping the throttle doesn't de-activate it and there's not a resume button either.

Heated grips don't come as standard (£138 extra), but you do get the button regardless, which can be a bit upsetting when you press it and nothing happens. The riding mode switch is

also largely redundant. Rain mode, cutting power to 100bhp, is too doughy and unpredictable in its delivery – almost as though there's lag in the drive-train.

Sport on the other hand is a touch too sharp, especially on these wet mountain roads, whereas Touring is just right; still a smidge artificial when compared with an old-fashioned cable operation as opposed to this ride-by-wire system, but still measurable enough for the full breadth of riding.

Left-hand controls feature the usual horns and buttons, with it the two buttons on the dash unit that allow you to vary traction control from setting 1 (minimal intrusion), through 2 to 3 (maximum intrusion), with a fourth option to turn it off completely. ABS can also be fully disabled, with the other operation dealt with by these two buttons being the ADD suspension,

CLOSEST RIVAL

DUCATI MULTISTRADA £12,995

It's a toss up between this and the R1200GS, but given the more road-orientated nature of the Caponord, it's the Ducati that feels the most similar. More power for the Ducati – 25bhp – and certainly a more sporty ride, especially over the new Rally edition of the Caponord with its 19in front wheel (17in front for the Ducati).

The Multistrada's not as comfortable or relaxed over distances than the Aprilia however, it's more demanding of the rider too. For a short Sunday blast the Ducati rules, for longer journeys consider the Aprilia.



which, like traction control, requires the bike to be static before allowing adjustment.

Select between ride, rider and luggage, two-up and two-up with luggage, or, as already suggested, best just to leave it in auto and crack on with it.

The road climbs up and through a shallow valley. The road surface is smooth but wet. Pace is gentle and tentative. What you first notice – and

BELOW: The bigger front wheel means that the bike needs a bit more oomph to turn into corners but it's much more stable as a result.



SMARTPHONE

Like the regular Caponord, the Rally can be paired with your smartphone, connecting it to the bike's electronics.

An additional dashboard gives lean angle and speed, the amount of power being generated, to what extent the traction control is intervening and can even guide you back to your bike if you lose it in a car park.



RESONATOR

The Rally has been fitted with a new resonator in the exhaust to give higher torque output at low to medium revs. The resonator is simply an increased expansion chamber before the pipe enters the can, allowing the gases to expand. It can be retro-fitted to the regular bike, requiring a remap of the engine at a cost expected to be around £200 for the resonator and remap.

ACTIVE SUSPENSION

Semi-active ADD suspension adjusts for preload and damping on the move. The damping works with a rotary potentiometer on the rear shock and a pressure sensor in the air gap of the forks, measuring how far the suspension is compressing and also the rate at which it is working. The suspension in turn adjusts the damping to suit the terrain, doing so in milliseconds. Unlike on GS there is no way of tailoring damping manually.

SPOKED WHEELS

As well as being larger at the front, the wheels are now spoked, in a patented Aprilia pattern. Tubeless tyres remain as spokes are set on the outside of the rim. Water collects in the lip of the rim when stationary. To maintain the same seat height and wheelbase as standard model, changes were made to the Rally's trail in order to reduce impact of 19in wheel.

ABOVE: It's an idea that's been around for a while on the Caponord, using your smart phone to add to the info coming from the bike. It's quite a clever system.

ABOVE: The low-swept exhaust means that you get full-sized panniers on both sides of the bike, rather than having to lose capacity to make space for an upswept pipe.

it's the same on the 17in-wheeled bike – is just how little pitch there is under braking on a Caponord. In sensing the forks under compression, ADD increases damping to compensate. Same with the rear under acceleration.

This gives rise to a strange sensation at first – the piloting of a very flat riding motorcycle – but once adjusted to, and with no real loss to feel, the pace quickens and the confidence in the Tourance Next tyre increases. These really are a surprisingly good tyre, offering plenty of feedback in the

corners. It was along these tight and twisting sections of the road that the strengths of the Caponord really shone through.

There's an agility about the bike, mated to a crisp and responsive engine that surprises you when the road opens and you can wind out all 123bhp. It's not immediate punch as on a GS or Multistrada, more a slow build to an almighty speed, and the sound, once cracked open, is glorious. Through a tunnel it encourages the mischievous, more so than any other big adventure bike I've ridden for a while.

The four-piston Brembo front brakes gripping twin 320mm discs are also keen enough, though with plenty of travel in the lever, so not as hair-trigger as some, allowing quite a fair bit of nuance before really kicking in.

In terms specific to the Rally, what you notice about the new 19in wheel, understandably, is a touch less speed in the change of direction. The upshot is stability and composure that comes in abundance. Mid-corner ripples and bumps don't trouble the bike (nor on

the straights), and with those wide bars you can really push and pull your way around. The larger front wheel then does make a difference.

The other parts of the kit – the guards, bash plate and panniers less so – but it's when parked up and admiring the bike that it does all come together quite nicely. The Rally feels and looks more complete than the standard model. The fit and finish too is for the most part top-notch. There were a few rough edges when up close, such as the hose from the radiator already staining. Off-road later that day was something of a revelation. The Caponord Rally, surprisingly, wasn't that bad for a 260kg (wet) adventure-tourer, not as good as GS, more in line with Yamaha's Super Tenere.

That leaves us left only with the price. At £14,134 the Rally is a thousand pounds more than the Travel Pack. That's a lot of money but you are getting a lot more bike than before.

If nothing else you have to ride one, then make up your mind if it's the one for you or not.



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£13,134

APRILIA CAPONORD 1200

V-twin • 125bhp • 24-litre tank • 840mm seat • 245kg (f)

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£10,999

KTM 1050 ADVENTURE

V-twin • 94bhp • 23-litre tank • 850mm seat • 212kg (f)

Real world adventure bike with low tech and strong road focus.



£13,999

KTM 1190 ADVENTURE

V-twin • 148bhp • 23-litre tank • 860/875mm seat • 217kg (f)

Powerful, comfortable and boldly styled. Perfect for touring.



£13,999

KTM 1190 ADVENTURE R

V-twin • 148bhp • 23-litre tank • 890mm seat • 217kg (f)

Big enduro machine with clever tech and real off-road ability.



£15,999

KTM 1290 SUPER ADVENTURE

V-twin • 160bhp • 30-litre tank • 860/875mm seat • 229kg (f)

Super hi-tech, super comfy adventure-styled mile muncher.



£10,999

YAMAHA XT1200ZE

Inline twin • 110bhp • 23-litre tank • 845/870mm seat • 257kg (f)

Great bike that's truly underestimated. Big, comfy and stable.



£11,900

BMW R1200GS

Flat twin • 125bhp • 20-litre tank • 850/870mm seat • 238kg (f)

Best-selling adventure bike, with real dual-purpose credentials.



£12,850

BMW R1200GS ADVENTURE

Flat twin • 125bhp • 30-litre tank • 890/910mm seat • 260kg (f)

Huge comfort, big range, with fantastic motor and handling too.



£8800

BMW F800GS

Inline twin • 85bhp • 16-litre tank • 880mm seat • 214kg (f)

Competent middleweight, with off-road potential and tough looks.



£9760

BMW F800GS ADVENTURE

Inline twin • 85bhp • 24-litre tank • 890mm seat • 229kg (f)

Big tourer spec on a smaller-size machine. Well suited for big trips.



£7770

BMW F700GS

Inline twin • 75bhp • 16-litre tank • 820mm seat • 209kg (f)

Manageable middleweight with a utilitarian look and road-focused ride.



£6290

BMW G650GS

Single cylinder • 48bhp • 14-litre tank • 800mm seat • 192kg (f)

Great, simple little bike. Strong economy and easy to ride everywhere.

ADVENTURE BIKES

£12,400



BMW S1000XR

Inline-four • 160bhp • 20-litre tank • 840mm seat • 228kg (f)

Big comfy stance, loads of power and great handling for the pure roads.

£11,899



MV AGUSTA TURISMO VELOCE

Inline triple • 110bhp • 20-litre tank • 850mm seat • 191kg (e)

Sporty middleweight adventure-styled tourer with hi-tech brain.

£7995



CCM GP450 ADVENTURE

Single • 40bhp • 20-litre tank • 890mm seat • 125kg (e)

British-built featherweight all-terrain motorcycle, with a substantial range.

£3799



WK TRAIL 400

Single • 29bhp • 16-litre tank • 900mm seat • 162kg (e)

Affordable, lightweight adventure bike with off-road capabilities.

£6749



KAWASAKI VERSYS 650

Inline twin • 68bhp • 21-litre tank • 840mm seat • 214kg (f)

Sports orientated, middleweight machine with big comfort and great handling.

£9749



KAWASAKI VERSYS 1000

Inline-four • 118bhp • 21-litre tank • 840mm seat • 250kg (f)

Upright tourer with a torquey, smooth motor and a dynamic chassis.

£6899



SUZUKI V-STROM 650

V-twin • 68bhp • 20-litre tank • 835mm seat • 214kg (f)

Agile, comfortable and practical bike. Basic but brilliant at the same time.

£8999



SUZUKI V-STROM 1000

V-twin • 100bhp • 20-litre tank • 850mm seat • 228kg (f)

A very popular road-focused adventure bike. Great engine, very sporty handling.

£5499



HONDA CB500X

Inline twin • 47bhp • 17.3-litre tank • 810mm seat • 196kg (f)

Light and simple motorcycle, with big-bike looks and tough build quality.

£6299



HONDA NC750X

Inline twin • 54bhp • 14.1-litre tank • 830mm seat • 219kg (f)

Torquey, low revving twin with a unique design and a very economical nature.

£10,299



HONDA VFR800X

V4 • 104bhp • 20.8-litre tank • 835/815mm seat • 242kg (f)

Fantastic engine, with plenty of character and a very agile chassis.

£12,399



HONDA CROSSTOURER

V4 • 127bhp • 21.5-litre tank • 850mm seat • 275kg (f)

Big comfy armchair of an adventure-style bike. Well suited to long distances.

£8499



TRIUMPH TIGER 800 XR

Inline triple • 94bhp • 19-litre tank • 810/830mm seat • 213kg (f)

Second generation of a fantastic concept. Great road holding and vibrant motor.

£8999



TRIUMPH TIGER 800XC

Inline triple • 94bhp • 19-litre tank • 840/860mm seat • 218kg (f)

Capable middleweight off-road motorcycle. A sophisticated and capable ride.

£9899



TRIUMPH TIGER SPORT

Inline triple • 125bhp • 20-litre tank • 830mm • 235kg (f)

Big, comfy and very torquey. Smooth riding giant, with road focus.

£11,599



TRIUMPH EXPLORER 1200

Inline triple • 137bhp • 20-litre tank • 837/857mm seat • 259kg (f)

Fantastic motor that trumps its rivals. Great road bike, with off-road potential.



Yamaha's 2015 R1: RESURRECTION OF A SPECIES

If Valentino made Superbikes he'd probably make this. Actually, Rossi's lot did have more than a passing hand in the clever stuff about the R1 that makes it so utterly amazing. Yamaha has moved the goalposts. It's 1998 all over again. Only better.

WORDS: Tony Carter **PICTURES:** Alessio Barbanti, Henry Benno Stern, Josh Evans

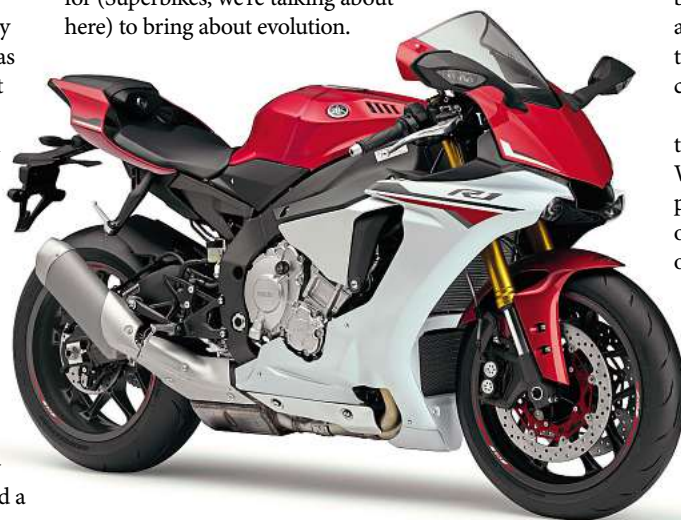
Yamaha has been in a real purple patch over the past couple of years. The MT range has revitalised the brand, there's new people in charge making the right decisions and before we could blink (in evolutionary bike terms) most of us are again expecting the big and the good from the tuning fork brigade.

So, when the men who are now steering the ship announced that they were going to make a new R1 that was virtually a MotoGP machine in heart and soul (and carbon fibre) well... those who like to really ride on track were more than justified in getting overly excited.

When the original bike was launched in 1998 the goalposts moved in a way similar to when Honda launched the first Fireblade in 1992. In 2009 the R1 appeared with the crossplane crank motor and was supposed to be the second coming – but it was all a bit of flam. Yep, there was a new growl from the new motor layout and a bit more mid-range that was very

welcome but in terms of power output, in a world that's so competitive about such things, there was nothing new. Traction control and no more power for a serious period of time has left the R1 languishing. Of course, the bike was more than you'd ever need on the road and without much desire to push things further it'd take a pretty radical re-think of exactly what these bikes are for (Superbikes, we're talking about here) to bring about evolution.

BELOW: In the flesh the R1 is much smaller in terms of physical presence than the pictures suggest. Compact, bijou and utterly thrilling to ride.



That's what sparked the motorcycle you see before you. A major re-think. I'm paraphrasing project leader, Hideki Fujiwara, here, but he told me: "When you decide to think about how this motorcycle can be on the track and don't have to factor in a lot of the road conventions then you can focus the bike. But that focus isn't about being harder and more racebike, it is about balance, smoothness and stability. It's about building a motorcycle that's a tool for the rider to use with confidence."

And you know what? Yamaha's hit that idea nail bang on the head. Without fear of over-egging this pudding I can tell you that this R1 is one of the most together, well-thought out and cleverly useable bits of biking kit that has ever been made.

Yamaha needed to pull this off, with Superbike sales overall dwindling the idea to make everything sharper (200bhp, electronics out of the wazoo and keep the weight down) was obvious, and pretty much what the market is doing en masse – so to

First Rides

keep up and compete the template was set before this bike began. An early prototype for the bike was an R1 motor in an R6 chassis, imagine that without the myriad electronics to help keep it under control...

Those electronics are another example of how serious Yamaha is taking this. Developed with a large chunk of computer know-how from the 2011 M1 MotoGP bike, the R1 gets a plethora of helpful things such as slide control, anti-lift to keep the front wheel down under hard acceleration, combined braking and a system that uses six sets of information to measure things such as pitch and yaw as you ride.

In real terms it means that the bike feels small but not cramped, the way the systems interact are jaw-dropping. Driving hard out of the second gear Turn Two, or the final uphill left at the Australian Eastern Creek circuit, is such an incredible show of force that you can really think that this is what Rossi must feel like when he's on a roll. No matter how far off his pace you are in reality.

CONTINUES OVER PAGE



NOSE

It might look like a bit of design to catch the eye, but all you see here has a purpose. The face of the bike improves wind-cutting by eight per cent and the lights are mounted lower and effectively 'in' the nose of the bike for better weight distribution.



TANK

Sculpted with large knee scallops out of the sides, just like the MotoGP bike, the tank will 'only' hold 17 litres but it's likely that by the time you get the bike thirsty you'll be ready to stop too, so that shouldn't be too much of an issue. Made from aluminium, the gorgeous tank is a full 1.5kg lighter than a steel version would have been. The welding on it is sublime, also.

EXHAUST

There's a new design valve, which at less than 7500rpm, keeps the gases flowing through just one of the two internal chambers, which helps boost the torque. Get more than 7500rpm and the gas flows through both chambers and the bike gets going as nature intended. The 4-2-1 system is all new on the bike with the end deliberately compact to keep the mass of the unit as close to the centre of the bike and as low down as possible.

WHEELS

Instead of using cast wheels on the R1, Yamaha has gone for 10-spoke magnesium units - mainly for weight saving reasons. The front is 530g lighter than the cast equivalent and the rear is 340g less bother for the scales. It might not sound like much but you feel the change most on turn-in to a corner which takes less effort with less spinning force to overcome.



CHASSIS

Two figures tell you all you need to know about the chassis and how this bike was designed, the wheelbase - 10mm shorter than the old bike - and the same rake and trail as before. That gives the bike a very track-focused chassis in terms of feel. Gravity-cast Deltabox frame uses the engine as a stressed member and is married to a magnesium subframe. There's a combination of gravity and forged parts that make up the swingarm which looks very racetrack, and comes in for this year 15mm shorter than the old version.

CLUTCH:

Very, very good. The clutch might be smaller and lighter than the one on the old bike (20% lighter, in fact) but it works way above its station.

Tagged as an 'assist and slipper clutch' it basically helps out with up changes at pace and comes into action as a slipper clutch as you go down through the gears. Tidy.

BRAKES

Front and back brakes are linked on the new R1 to help keep the bike as level as possible as you set it up for corners, the pair are monitored, and brake pressure in relation to what you put into the level is delivered by the onboard IMU brain. If you just stamp on the back though it doesn't work, hitting the back brake alone gets you just back brake, front brake only gets you the linked system. The front brakes are awesome though, four-piston monobloc calipers (Yamaha's own) are mated to 320mm discs.

**Specification****YAMAHA R1 £14,999**

Engine: liquid-cooled, 4-stroke, dohc, 16-valve, forward-inclined parallel, four-cylinder

Displacement: 998cc

Bore/stroke: 79.0 x 50.9mm

Power: 197bhp @ 13,500rpm

Torque: 82.9lb-ft @ 11,500rpm

Compression ratio: 13.0:1

Transmission: Six gears

Fuel system: Fuel injection, 45mm throttle bodies

Clutch: Wet, multiple-disc

Frame: Aluminium Deltabox

Subframe: Magnesium

Front suspension: KYB upside down 43mm fully adjustable with 120mm of travel

Rear suspension: Kayaba single shock, fully adjustable

Front brake: Four piston monobloc calipers on 320mm discs, ABS

Rear brake: Two piston single caliper on 220mm disc, ABS

Front tyre: 120/70 ZR17M/C (58W)

Rear tyre: 190/55 ZR17M/C (75W)

Caster angle: 24 degrees

Trail: 102mm

Wheelbase: 1402mm

Ground clearance: 130mm

Seat height: 855mm

Tank capacity: 17 litres/3.9 litres reserve

Wet weight: 199kg

Contact: www.yamaha-motor.eu, Yamaha UK: 01932 358000

SUSPENSION

Kayaba provides the suspension for the standard R1 with Ohlins putting in the active set-up for the R1-M. With the R1 the bike uses 43mm USD forks, which are fully adjustable, like the excellent rear shock. The forks give 120mm of travel.

The engine details

When Yamaha changed the engine of the R1 in 2009 to the crossplane motor it was more of change for new ideas rather than any increase in power (the new motor didn't actually make any more power but delivered it in a very mid-range-heavy, almost lazy in feel way). This latest version of that landmark motor, however, has a lot more oomph to it.

There's a 36mm shorter and lighter crankshaft to ensure plenty of low and midrange kick and there's a balancer which is thinner with its weight close to the outside of the cylinder.

The bike's bore and stroke is changed from 78 x 52.2mm to 79 x 50.9mm and the pistons are new.

The con rods are 40% lighter because they are made from titanium (the R1 is the first production bike to have these) and the rocker-arm valve-drive mechanism (DLC coated, like the pistons) gives higher valve lift than the cam height.

Compression goes up to 13.01 and the valves are bigger (33mm intake and 26.5mm exhaust holes).

To ensure that the bike can breathe effectively when it's stretching its legs the airbox is now 10.5 litres, 24% bigger than on the old bike. To feed the motor the fuel injection now uses tow-directional 12-hole injectors to make sure that fuel isn't sprayed on to the port walls.



The brakes are Yamaha's own brand, the system is linked if you only use the front lever and by applying both brakes the set-up keeps the bike level and very stable into corners.

The riding position is instantly easy to get on with. You're not pitched forward, it's far more neutral than you'd think with plenty of room, which lets you really clamber about, should the mood take you. The concept of making the bike like the MotoGP bike, a stable and predictable bike with lots of power and plenty of help, is evident from the very start. Having the first session in Australia at the world launch peppered with rain was handy because it meant we all bedded in and could appreciate the finer points of the bike instead of instantly trying to push it hard in a short period of time and then staying at that level.

The clever bits of brain that look after the motor give the bike huge, feelable power, from low down it'll pull cleanly from very low-revs and starts to hustle from 5000rpm up. The engine just pulls like a pukka racebike all the way to 11,000rpm with the front wheel lifting then being put down by the anti-wheelie system onboard. You get a sense that this is probably edging a bit of time and pace from you when it happens, but it's your choice whether to keep it on or not. I liked it (but then

I've never been one for chasing the fastest lap times).

The chassis is terrific. 10mm shorter than last year's bike overall with the swingarm 15mm shorter than the previous version too, while keeping the front-end geometry the same as went before, give this R1 the turn-in speed and lightness of feel of a 600. Really. The lighter magnesium wheels help that too of course, but it's a weapon of a package.

You can read about the various electronics elsewhere in this article so I won't go on about them here, but what this R1 does do is genuinely bridge the gap between 'Just like Rossi's' bike and the real world. OK, so when Yamaha said it wanted to think more about the track than the road but still make a bike that was as easy to get on with (which sounds strange to say) as a MotoGP bike then you can see how this has become such a good bike.

This R1 has changed the game all over again. It's focused without being too hard, it's easy to ride without being stupidly complex and it knows what it is without having to worry about being road-useable.

The upshot is that although we've not ridden one of these on the road yet, I'll bet that this bike actually makes one incredible roadster too.

All boxes ticked.



THE ELECTRONICS:

There's a lot of them

Yamaha has given the bike a six-axis Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU) which uses three gyros in the bike to measure pitch, roll and yaw. There's also three G-sensors, which monitor acceleration, through the pitch, roll and yaw. What this means in real time is that the brain (IMU) can instruct the computer's control unit to either adjust the fuel injection volume, the ignition timing or the throttle valve opening as required to save the bike from going down if the rider asks too much from it for given parameters such as lean angle.

The bike also has slide control to allow varying degrees of slide depending on what setting the system has selected by the rider. It's a preset amount of movement sideways slide that the bike allows and then corrects electronically. This is real state-of-the-art stuff, Slide Control was only put on MotoGP bikes a couple of seasons ago so this is very close to genuinely being just like Valentino's bit of kit... no, really.

The quickshifter is adjustable and the power mode selector has four maps. The bike also gets LIF (basically, wheelie control: to stop the front getting too lairy under hard acceleration and there's also launch control, which keeps revs less than 10,000rpm to help off the line.

How the electronics come into play when you ride

SYSTEMS THAT USE IMU INFORMATION:

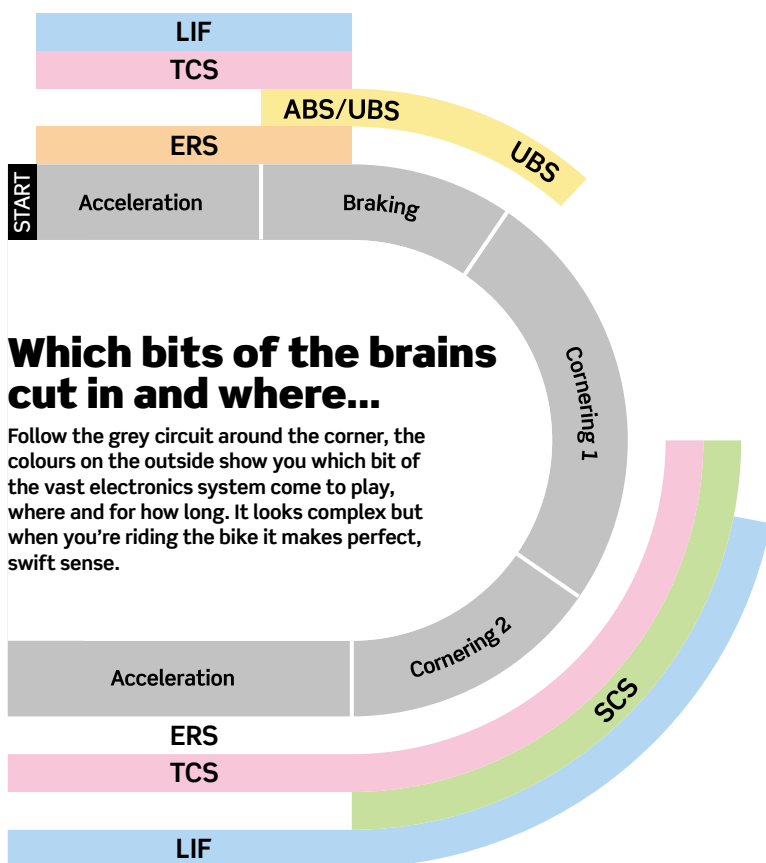
TCS The traction control system has evolved through the monitoring of lean angle, to control the appropriate amount of slip

SCS The slide-control system limits the amount of power once you're in a slide for a certain amount of sideways movement

LIF The lift-control system controls the amount of power from the engine in line with the pitch rate. If you lift the front then the engine is held in check for a split second to get things back under control

UBS The unified brake system monitors lean angle and then alters the amount of braking to both the front and back brakes

ERS The electronic racing suspension (on the R1-M only) adjusts the suspension automatically in line with acceleration and lean angle



Speed, around 70mph
- second gear, 5500rpm

The editor, realising
that he'll be spitting
out gravel in five
seconds time

This is the black
tyre slide line from
the rear tyre

The white line from
the knee slider

Here is where the electronics have cut-in
over and over to try to save the slide and
keep the bike upright.

Effectively, it's a pulse,
pulse, pulse, pulse of
less power to bring the
bike back from the brink.
Had there been enough
tyre contact patch on the
circuit then it's very likely
that this would have worked

Traction control working: CAUGHT IN A SPLIT SECOND

For the first time ever, evidence on track of exactly how the system tries to help

OK, so let's get the big explain about this image (and why we've used it here) out of the way. This is me, TC, in the third track session in Australia on the Yamaha R1.

This was our first full-dry session of the day and I was using the very predictable and very rideable Turn Two at Eastern Creek to see how the bike's traction control system worked. At every lap I was reducing the amount of electronic interruption in the bike and lapping the corner at full-lean angle to see at what point the linear connection between bike and tyre became too much for the electronics – if indeed it did.

But I made a mistake. Pushing the bike too far on the lean angle with the traction backed off too much (three from being off completely) I gassed the Superbike out of the apex of the corner as I had several laps before already. Expecting the bike to hook-

up and drive out of the turn I instead found that with such a small amount of tyre underneath me, there was nothing that the electronic brains could do. This is the perfect example of how all the electronic gizmos in the world won't stop you from crashing if you get it wrong.

But, what is THE most amazing thing in this photo of the crash just starting to happen underneath me, is the marks on track.

Take a look at the long, white line on track being left by my white knee slider. From that you can see that; a) I'm probably using the knee too heavily when it should really be skimming along the surface and b) the corner (up until this point) had been a smooth, high lean angle progression on a constant radius, just like all the laps before.

Now, look at the more interesting dark line running a couple of feet behind the white

line. Notice how it's effectively dotted? Well THAT'S traction control operation at 125 times a second and doing all it can to help me out – had I left enough tyre gripping the track then it would have pulsed back enough power to stop me doing what I eventually did. At about 70mph.

You can see the tyre slide mark pulsing. Where it's dark is where the tyre has slide under power, then there's no mark for a small period of the track where the electronics have retarded the power in such a way as to allow the tyre to grip again, then another part of the slide, another retardation and so on.

It's something we've never seen caught on camera before – and it's certainly the first time that the new R1's electronics have been snapped in this way.

And yes, it did hurt. Quite a bit.

THE BIG BRAIN:

Project Leader Hideki Fujiwara

MSL: This seems like such a huge change in the R1 that the sheer size of the team involved must have been huge – like a MotoGP set-up almost, is that right?

HF: In total at one time we had up to 100 people working on the project, but as the project progressed there were many different people working on many different areas and we have to apply the right amount of people to the right parts of development at the right time.

MSL: There has been much made of the fact that you are the project leader of the new R1 and you worked on the original bike, too. Tell us about what stands out as the big differences between then and this bike for you.

HF: I did work on the original R1 in 1998 and on that project I was working on parts of the engine. Back then the bike was not as complex as it is now. We have seen the output rise greatly and throughout the design life of the R1 we have had innovations to work out, like the YCC-T system and fuel injection. With these motorcycles now we have to factor in the amount of electronic systems on the motorcycle to help give the bike in the best possible way at any time that the rider wants. The electronics are key to how we can deliver the power and the chassis in the best way.

It's because of that need to use the electronics and use them to help us deliver the bike in a useable way that we brought in a lot of what we learnt in MotoGP. This motorcycle is very close in terms of electronics to the MotoGP motorcycles.



MSL: This R1 has been made to a much more focused – track-oriented – brief than previous bikes, why was this direction taken and how did the execution of it come about?

HF: We knew that if we concentrated on making this motorcycle a motorcycle primarily for the track then we could focus our ideas and design to make it work in this environment better. My team and I rode the 2011 MotoGP bike and we found that it was very precise but stable, it gave good feedback and was still powerful and maintained its ability to go very well on the track. This was the start point to make the new R1, we wanted the new bike to have a lot of those qualities and to use a lot of what we'd learned in MotoGP.

Closest Rival

DUCATI 1299 PANIGALE £16,695 (S VERSION £20,795)

The 1285cc V-twin certainly packs the ponies, kicking out 205bhp – eight more than the R1.

Like the Yamaha, the Ducati has two versions; a standard model and the S, which gets lighter forged wheels and upgraded electronics and suspension.

It's still hardcore sportsfare though, despite what Ducati may try to calm down with taller screen, wider mirrors and better, more comfortable seat.

In comparison with the old bike, the 1299 kicks out 15% more torque between 5000 and 8000rpm and it's that which instils some old-school Ducati feel to the bike, too. The big plus here is the return of the V-twin classic character and the joy of using a bike like this in its natural habitat. Full-on on track.



THE R1-M:

More cash but plenty more bike for it

If there's one burning question about going for the M version of the bike over the standard option then it has to be: 'Is it worth the extra £3500?'. Yes, yes it is.

What you get, in terms of the biggest bang for the most buck, is the Ohlins' electronic racing suspension. The system takes its cues from the onboard IMU brain and makes adjustments to set-up while riding. There are several inner-levels of settings for the geek in you and you can either have the whole system set-up in manual or automatic mode. The sublime forks have the compression damping in the left leg and the rebound adjustment in set from the right with lots of fine grades of adjustability available in both. The R1-M is dressed in the most wonderful-looking carbon bodywork (saves a whole 300g – so don't undo all that work by eating a couple of bags of crisps in the week) and the bike swaps the 190 road rubber for sweetly predictable 200-section Bridgestone RS10R slicks. The M version of the R1 also gets wireless-enabled CCU which allows you to log your ride directly to an app; the information includes lean angle, GPS and speed.

MT-09 - with Free Akrapovic titanium exhaust and Cat worth over £1000*



Free Akrapovic exhaust and catalytic converter with all new MT-09 and MT-09 ABS models, available from participating Yamaha dealers for a limited period only while stocks last.

*Free accessory exhaust and catalyser is available for a limited period



MiYamaha Personal Contract Purchase is a great way to finance your new Yamaha with affordable* monthly repayments. At the end of the MiYamaha contract you can:

- Part exchange your bike for a new Yamaha**
- Pay the final repayment and take ownership of your Yamaha
- Return the bike and not pay the final repayment***

Representative Example

Cash Price	Deposit or Part Exchange	Total Amount of Credit	Agreement Duration	Purchase Fee†	36 Monthly Repayments of	Final Repayment of	Total Amount Payable	Interest Rate (Fixed)	Representative APR
£7,084.00	£1,715.00	£5,369.00	37 Months	£10.00	£95.00	£3,171.00	£8,306.00	9.14%	9.6% APR

Representative Example based on an annual mileage of 6000. †Included in Final Repayment.

www.yamaha-motor.eu/uk



Finance is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. MiYamaha Personal Contract Purchase is only available through Yamaha Finance which is a trading style of Black Horse Ltd., St William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff CF10 5BH. This finance offer ends 30th April 2015. *With a PCP product a significant proportion of the total amount payable is payable at the end of the contract by one large final repayment, so your regular monthly repayments are low. **Subject to payment of outstanding finance; new finance agreements are subject to status. ***If the motorcycle is in good condition and has not exceeded the allowed mileage you will have nothing further to pay. If the motorcycle has exceeded the allowed mileage a charge for excess mileage will apply.



Richa Daytona and Element

There are two new jackets from Richa:

The vintage/cafe racer-styled Daytona is made from high-quality buffalo leather and comes with CE-approved D30 elbow and shoulder armour, and a D30 back protector.

There's a removable thermal lining, a soft neoprene collar and the usual array of pockets and adjusters. Designed to look the part off the bike as well as on it, it comes in black, blue, brown, red and cognac colourways. There's also a ladies' version.

PRICE: £249.99

The Element is really two jackets; a high-density polyamide outer shell, and a windproof down jacket which you wear inside it, or separately. Inside there's a vintage cotton lining and D30 CE-approved elbow, shoulder back protectors. There's a removable hood, soft-lined collar and cuffs, four external pockets and adjustments throughout. There are men's and ladies' versions, both in the usual range of sizes, and both in the black outer/blue inner colour.

PRICE: £199.99.

CONTACT: 01425 478936

WEB: www.nevis.uk.com



Shark Skwal

Something very new and different from Shark, the Skwal helmet has LED lights built into the front and back to help with low-light visibility. Although we've not seen one in action yet, seems like a pretty good idea to us.

There are no batteries to mess about with, just two hours charging via USB gives you eight hours of illumination. You also get Pinlock's new Max Vision anti-fogging insert; Shark's patented Autoseal system that helps improve the visor seal for less wind noise and better insulation from the cold and the wet, an integrated sun visor, channels for the arms of specs, ventilation system, a quick-release visor, double D-ring closure and the option to use Shark's comms system.

PRICE: £189.99 (plain colours)

£199.99 (graphics)

CONTACT: 01425 478936

WEB: www.nevis.uk.com



TCX X-Blend and X-Garage

Two new offerings from Italian boot maker TCX: both casually styled but with motorcycle protection and features...

The X-Blend Waterproof (£149.99) have a brushed full-grain leather upper, a waterproof liner and heel and toe reinforcements. The sole contains a thermoplastic varying thickness mid-sole, which makes them EN 13634:2010 CE certified. They come in brown or black, EU sizes 39-47.

TCX says the X-Garage (£129.99) are inspired by American-style work boots.

They're also brushed leather for a vintage look, but are lined with air mesh material for breathability in higher temperatures. They have a fast-lacing system, heel and toe reinforcements and a lightweight, EVA sole. They're available in sizes 38-48, in brown only.



CONTACT:

01425 478936

WEB:

www.nevis.uk.com

Enzo outfit

Vintage motorbike and sidecar outfit for boys and girls who love their toys (£45).

Designed by Cameron Treeby, who began the range with a single racing car design for Habitat, The Enzo motorbike is 28cm long and made from ABS plastic and TPE rubber with a hard-wearing UV coating, so it'll stand a few

knocks and crashes. The driver and passenger are both leaning forward into a corner and look resplendent in their jolly metallic helmets.

Suitable for aged three years or above. Bigger boys may prefer to call it a desk accessory.

CONTACT: 01865 883061

WEB: www.meandmycar.co.uk



Oxford Protex stretch-fit covers

These new covers from Oxford are designed to fit tightly over your bike, reducing the risk of it flapping and coming off. The outdoor version is made from a three-layer material to protect against weather and light knocks, it has an elasticated bottom and adjustable belly strap to hold the cover in place and holes (front and rear) to run a lock/chain through. There are lock pouches to keep your padlock off the ground too.



It also has a clear window for a Oxford Solariser battery charger and one to show the numberplate (optional). It has the usual water-resistant seams, a soft lining protects against scratches, while ventilation reduces condensation; there are also reflective panels and logos. The indoor version is

also soft lined and is breathable to prevent moisture/corrosion. It has an elasticated base with adjustable belly strap.

PRICE: (from) £29.99.

CONTACT: 01993 862300

WEB: www.oxprod.com

Magura X-Line CPX

Magura has managed to get multiple world and European stunt riding champion, Chris Pfeiffer, to stay still long enough to help the company develop a special edition of its X-Line handlebars.

They're made from aircraft-specification, shot-blasted aluminium, using Magura's patented X-line production process – one of only two worldwide patents for tapered

handlebars – to help make them strong enough for stunting, but still lightweight and able to soak up bumps and vibes.

They come in various heights and widths, and can be fitted to enduro, motocross and on naked, sport or touring road bikes. They'll set you back £71.34.

CALL: 01306 885111

VISIT: www.venhill.co.uk



Forcefield EX-K Harness



Forcefield's new EX-K Harness is reinforced with Kevlar thread for added strength and durability and features an open design system and multiple adjustment for flexibility and comfort.

There's a central front zip for ease of use, a neck brace location point and CE Level 2 back, chest, shoulder and elbow armour for complete upper body protection. The armour is Nitrex Evo which is soft, flexible, moulds to your body shape and

offers RPT (Repeat Performance Technology) for consistent protection after multiple impacts.

It comes in three protection options: the Adventure (torso, shoulders and elbows), Flite+ (torso and shoulders) and the Flite (torso only) so riders can choose their level of protection. They all come in three sizes S/M/L. Prices as follows: Adventure: £329.99, Flite+: £269.99, Flite: £219.99.

CONTACT: 01933 410818

WEB: www.forcefieldbodyarmour.com

RST Raptor II Jacket and Pants

RIDER: Bruce Wilson

MILES: 700

PRICE: Jacket £149.99 /

Trousers £119.99

COLOURS: Black/sand/blue/

red/fluoro yellow

SIZES: Jacket (40-54) /

Trousers (30-40)

CONTACT: www.rst-moto.com



I got the Raptor II suit to tackle the worst of the winter. Riding green lanes is something I really enjoy but getting cold and wet is not quite as appealing. This past year's gone by with much more comfort than any other though, and that's down to the Raptor II suit I've been wearing.

With two lining seasons now under its belt, I can honestly say I've properly tested this particular RST adventure-styled jacket and jeans textile combination, and I'm really impressed with it. It's priced on a par with most entry level kit, but the performance it offers is much more akin to what you'd expect from mid-priced products and beyond.

This is undoubtedly down to the textiles' impressive spec. RST has its own waterproofing technology, called Sinaqua. And it delivers on that promise comprehensively. I've worn this suit in the worst of elements and can vouch to having never got wet in it aside from water that's risen around the lips of my boots, or the odd few drops entering my jacket from the collar opening.

You'd suffer the same in any kit, and if I was wearing the jacket's zip-off throat coat I'm sure nothing could've made its way into the garment from the top.

The standard jacket comes with loads of pockets, both inside

and out, as well as CE-approved body armour on the shoulders elbows and even back – most manufacturers don't bother with the back. The tough outer material of the jacket and trousers is made from a combination of Maxtex and Ballistic material, which has shown no signs of wear or damage despite far too many crashes for my own good.

One of the things I like most about this kit is its ability to be truly customised to suit my own body shape. The three quarter length jacket has loads of adjustability – both above and below the elbow – and the waist adjuster ensures a snug fit and a stylish look. This being the case despite a thick (75g) removable quilt, which is superb and keeping you warm on icy fresh mornings.

With the oncoming of spring, I've since removed the inner

fleece and often make use of the two chest vent pockets, which get cooling air to your torso when things start to get a little hot under the collar.

Plenty of stretch panels in the trousers mean that you're never

restricted on movement. It's also worth noting that the aperture size of the leg bottoms mean that you can get them over the top of boots, or simply bundle them up in size. I've yet to find a better suit for similar money.



The jacket features a CE-level back protector as standard.



An adjustable waist ensures a good and comfortable fit.



The jacket sleeves can also be adjusted to preference.



There are two vents on the jacket chest that button back.

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STEPHAN SCHALLER

BMW's guiding light

In recent years BMW's topped its previous best results with ease. A lot of the reason for that is down to the man at the top.

WORDS: Alan Cathcart PHOTOGRAPHY: BMW Motorrad

Stephan Schaller, 57, has been the CEO of BMW Motorrad since June 2012. A qualified mechanical engineer, he first worked for the BMW Group from 1981 to 1999, initially as a trainee in what was then the technology division, before going on to hold various management posts, including heading up production at BMW's Rosslyn automotive plant in South Africa.

Returning to the German brand three years ago, to head up the motorcycle division, he has been personally responsible for the company during what has transpired to be a hugely successful period for the manufacturer. *MSL* couldn't refuse the opportunity to sit down with Stephan in his Munich office to get a fuller perspective on BMW's continued sales achievements and ongoing global expansion.

MSL: Mr. Schaller, you've had a very successful recent tenure as CEO of BMW Motorrad. I understand last year was a record one for the company?

SS: Indeed so. We sold a total of 115,215 motorcycles in 2014, so an 8.3% increase over the 106,358 we made in 2013, and the first time BMW sold more than 120,000 motorcycles in a single year. But we manufactured around 130,000 units, definitely a lot more than last year because we had a little change in our philosophy to stock more at the beginning of the year.

This year has indeed started very positively for us, with 6263 maxi-scooters and motorcycles delivered to customers in January, a sales increase of 15.2% compared with January last year [when 5438 BMW two-wheelers were sold].



MSL: To what do you attribute the current success of BMW Motorrad?

SS: I think this is definitely not something that happened in the past two years, but was prepared long ago in the past. I joined BMW's car division back in 1981, and I was working there for nearly 20 years in different positions in the highly motivated car team before I went away to learn something else from other companies, such as Volkswagen.

I then had the chance to come back to this BMW motorcycle division, and I must tell you the motivation in this team is even beyond what I already experienced in the car division, and I believe this is the main reason for our

present success. More than 80% of the men and women working for BMW Motorrad ride motorcycles on a regular basis, so it's their passion as well as their job.

This means they know what they are talking about when it comes to developing products and marketing them, because it's also their hobby just as it has been mine for the past 40 years. I see that highly motivated team's personal involvement and hands-on knowledge about motorcycling as responsible for a big part of BMW's current success on two wheels.

So, we have an expert development team able to create a wide range of different products which are appealing to different sectors and segments of the market. But I can tell you that at least since I've been here there's been no bike released to customers before the top management team – so, myself and my guys directly running the company – have intensively ridden that bike, so we know exactly how it feels to our customers.

Of course, our development engineers are better at riding than we are – but we are average riders who are probably closer to the customer than the highly expert guys whose skills are needed to test the bikes. So we know very, very well in advance how they behave, and what we are giving to the customer.

MSL: Is another key ingredient in BMW's record growth that you have successfully expanded your global reach into new markets?

SS: Yes, indeed – so, for example, last year we sold close to 8000 bikes in Brazil, and this year it will be more than 10,000. Brazil is, after the USA, the second biggest export market for us, larger than any of the individual countries in Europe. We have manufactured a couple of parts locally, but the main focus is on CKD [complete knocked down motorcycles made in Germany for local assembly], and the factory will grow bigger as we continue to expand there. So, Brazil came first, but one year ago we also started assembling bikes in Thailand.

We already had car production there, but since January 2014 we have also started assembling BMW motorbikes, firstly the F800 models. But this is only the starting point, and we have plans to produce several other different models there for sale in the South-East Asia region, with the advantages in duties we get from manufacturing in Thailand.

MSL: BMW has forged an alliance with Indian manufacturer TVS?

SS: Yes, we searched for a long time to find the right partner in cost-effective manufacturing countries, not only India, and as a result of this search we found TVS. We announced in April 2013 that we will jointly produce several different designs of bikes on the same platform – so we will use local sourcing for components, but the engineering is 100% done by BMW.

This is a real win-win situation where we have the engineering know-how that the Indian company learns from, and they have the cost base which BMW Motorrad can benefit from globally. Looking at this company, I am 100% convinced that TVS is able to do first-class quality.

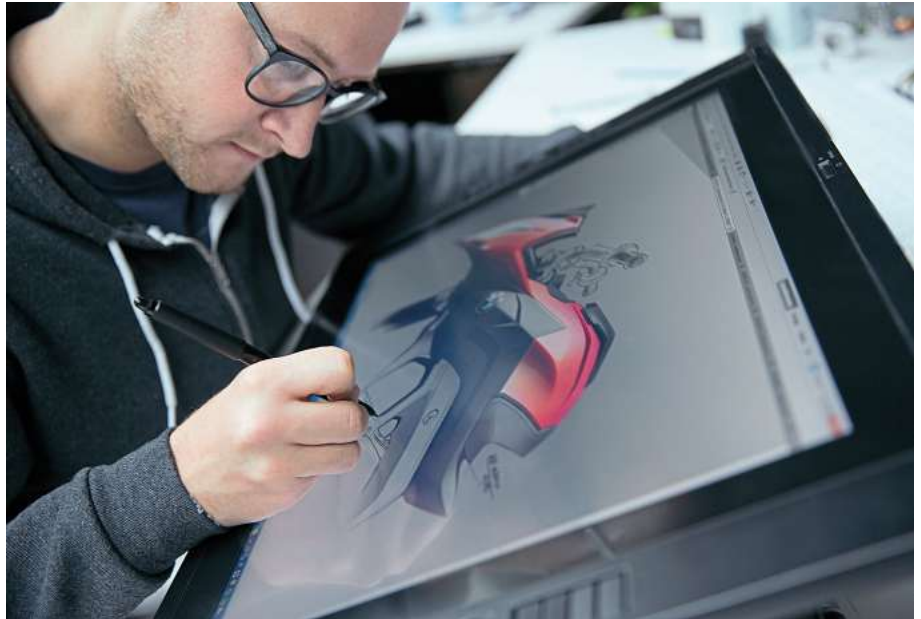
You can eat off the floor of their factory, it is so clean and well ordered – this is first class not in the technological sense as you find it in BMW factories, but translated to the needs of that region. So it's a 100% suitable base for us to get really competitive bikes out of, in terms of quality matched to price.

MSL: Will these TVS-BMW products be marketed in a similar way to those made in India by Bajaj for your KTM rivals – so, as entry-level products in developed markets, and prestige models in developing markets?

SS: First of all there is a big difference between the KTM Bajaj and BMW TVS link-ups, because we don't have any financial implications between us. It's the way I just described before – there is a mutual interest in building new models.

MSL: You are now at the stage of building 130,000 units annually at your Berlin plant. Are you going to run out of capacity there?

SS: No, we have made a lot of investment in what is a historic factory for BMW, adding lots of different buildings to expand



production. This gives us more than sufficient capacity in Berlin to look after the other four locations, especially in terms of manufacturing the more complicated engines.

MSL: So, no need to establish another BMW factory within Germany or in another European country to take up the extra demand?

SS: We have five, and they are placed in the right regions. Berlin is more than enough at present to satisfy demand in our core European market, covering also the USA, our biggest export market.

MSL: How about China, where you have had an agreement for some time with Loncin to assemble the F650 engine, without ever developing that alliance. Are you thinking of expanding there?

SS: We started eight years ago with Loncin, with a contract first for single-cylinder engine

assembly. Doing business with the Chinese is not very easy – it is very important to establish a relationship, and with Loncin we have now developed such a relationship.

We have therefore decided to produce a second engine there, a twin-cylinder middleweight design which is currently under development. This is a more complicated engine which will someday fire BMW's new mid-capacity class models. This is a very good basis for continued expansion of our relationship with Loncin.

MSL: Is BMW working on a diesel motorcycle?

SS: We have one under development, but beside spark combustion engines we are focusing on electric for the future, since we have a big advantage in being able to participate in what our big brothers are developing in the car segment.

MSL: BMW was once the world leader in supercharging. Kawasaki is launching a supercharged motorcycle. Is BMW planning to do the same?

SS: Definitely in the short term we are not planning to do so. We have our unsupercharged roadbikes that, as you know, are already running very fast – they have more than 200 horsepower. So the question is the same as with other alternative technologies – BMW is capable of producing anything, but do we have a market for it? Can we envisage volume sales for it? Is it the right thing to do, and is now the right time to do it?

What we did with the R nineT last year worked so well because it was the right time for BMW to step into the custom market, and be investing in that. So my answer is that in the short term we are not planning to do so – but if the time is right and it becomes the right thing to take it forward, then we are ready with all the basics to move very fast.





MSL: BMW has always been at the leading edge of alternative chassis technology, but your new R1200R has had its Telelever front end replaced with a conventional telescopic fork. Was this done for any other reason than a packaging one on that model? Or is this a change of direction for BMW?

SS: No, the main issue is the packaging for each new model, for which we have to develop different strategies. Here we did not have the space consistent with the styling and packaging to fit the bulky Telelever system, which would have required different cooling radiators etc.

But the ride quality and roadholding in this application are not compromised by removing the Telelever, whereas on the GS you have more space to fit a Telever, which gives you extra control and front wheel travel, so it is necessary for this type of model.

MSL: So there will be other BMW motorcycles in future with a Telelever front end?

SS: Yes, indeed. Depending on the model it can be Telelever in future, or upside down telefork or Duolever – or maybe something else! As we develop other bikes in the future you will see different technologies there.

MSL: One family of BMW models that hasn't really developed since its launch in 2011 is the six-cylinder K1600 range. What plans do you have for this in the future?

SS: I'm happy with the sales of this model segment. It's a very nice long-distance bike which is gaining lots of fans in the USA and all over Europe, and we are definitely heavily working on further developing the range of models powered by that wonderful engine within the two to three years.

MSL: You haven't had a cruiser model since the R1200C, and that's a huge market

globally. Are you going to do anything about it?

SS: No, we don't have a cruiser – but we must indeed find the right answer to enter the biggest motorcycle segment of our largest export market, which is the USA. However, we are not going to do so by copying another brand, because this was never successful in the past. We must follow our own rules.

MSL: Yes, but BMW reinvented the four-cylinder hypersports model by taking a Japanese-style inline four and doing it differently. Why wouldn't you do the same thing with a V-twin for the cruiser market?

SS: If we did a V-Twin we would do it differently, but we also have our BMW heritage and that is a more important consideration.

MSL: So no V-twin BMW?

SS: I don't want to go into more detail, but this model segment is very interesting for us, and up to now we are not really there, so this is an open target for us. We want to grow further in the next few years, and we have two main options to do so. One is to find new markets, so for example China, Latin America, South-East Asia and India, and the other one is new model segments. One key segment is below 500cc, which we are working on, and the other is cruisers.

MSL: Where is BMW going in the future?

SS: Without any tremendous development effort we can use what we already have, and widen it still further. There are lots of smaller model segments it's possible to make without developing a complete new model platform.

Of course we'll have a scrambler based on the R nineT, as well as a cafe racer. There are

other examples of diversification within each of the other model families without extending their number further.

MSL: Were you surprised by the success of the R nineT?

SS: We were not surprised, but to be honest it went well beyond our expectations. For this bike to race to number four in the list of bestsellers in BMW's entire range after the GS and GS Adventure and the R1200RT was completely unexpected.

It was a nice surprise, although it gave us a good problem as we had lots of customer saying that they wanted the bike, but had to wait four or five months to get one.

MSL: The R nineT was created for you by Roland Sands – do you have him under contract to make other models?

SS: The answer is yes – we will work together with Roland Sands in this direction even more closely. He creates these wonderful motorcycles in terms of styling and flair, but they actually work, they are functional – they are not like so many other custom bikes that are just nice to look at, but you wouldn't want to ride one.

Plus he's a great guy, not only in terms of his personality, but also from his intellect and his ability to understand motorcycles. And of course with BMW there's a huge base of potential customers for him to make money from – we have hundreds of thousands of bikes out there being ridden which he can find the right way to offer aftermarket parts to.

MSL: Presumably therefore the only thing wrong with Roland from BMW's standpoint is that he drives a Mercedes-Benz?

SS: Then we have to work on that!



HOW TO PREP YOUR HELMET

Keeping your helmet in top form should be a priority for all of us. Shark's Mark Eilledge showed us how to get your lid ready for the new season.

WORDS: Carli Ann Smith PHOTOGRAPHY: Joe Dick



Hair oils, sweat and general wear-and-tear cause helmet fatigue. It's commonly acknowledged that you should replace your lid every five years, but the message of servicing your essential kit is far less talked about. But it's essential stuff and

MSL was keen to find out more on what it takes to keep your helmet performing at its best across its lifespan.

Mark Eilledge has been working with motorcycle helmets for nearly 20 years. He's worked with Nolan, X-Lite, Arai and is currently the racing and technical manager for Shark. As well as spending his days visiting motorcycle dealers throughout the country to provide staff training, he also attends every round of the British Superbikes to look after sponsored and supported riders.

To say he knows a lot about helmets and how to keep them on top form is something of an understatement. We were keen to find out more when he came to our offices, so he gave us these six essential steps to keeping your lid at its best...

1. CLEAN IT

It's really important to clean your helmet first so that you can see everything clearly. You'll find that if you give it a wipe over after every ride then you'll find it easier to keep on top of it. Take the opportunity to check that your visor mechanism is working and all your buttons for vents are functioning. If it's a flip front, does it still flip up easily? Take the visor off at this point and clean that too.

We'd recommend using hand soap and water or an approved helmet cleaner and soft cloth – there are special products out there such as Shift-It Grime Buster sponge, which may look like a scourer but it's not, it's designed for plastics and paintwork and doesn't scratch – never use a household scourer on your helmet.

You can really get into cleaning your lid – use cotton buds to get into the vents and clear them out. Often little bugs can get inside and work their way through the vent and into the lining of the helmet and

2. CHECK THE OUTSIDE

Now that it's clean you can check the outside shell for any damage or scratches. Sometimes, damage to the outside can show if it's had a knock and could indicate that there is damage to the inside lining – however, bear in mind sometimes there are no marks or scuffs on the outside. If you throw your helmet into the corner of the garage or leave it on a shelf in the utility room, it may get knocked without you knowing – so prevent this by keeping it in a safe place.



3. REMOVE YOUR LINERS

If your helmet has removable liners then take them out. Essentially, a helmet wears from the inside out. Put it this way, imagine using the same pillow case for three years – the helmet starts to deteriorate because of the acids and the sweat from your head. By taking out the liners and washing them you're getting rid of the bacteria and making them last longer by cleaning them – not to mention making the helmet fresher and cleaner – and so it's much more appealing to put your head in.

Depending on how old or dirty your helmet liners are, you can get new ones – but on a number of helmets you can wash them to freshen them up. You can either stick the liners in a small washing net and put them in the washer on a delicate wash or you can wash them by hand with a mild soap (baby shampoo).

Work in the soap into the foam and be sure to rinse it properly. It's all about the rinsing – getting all that dirt and bacteria out of the sponge. Don't rinse it properly and you could end up with a helmet that smells like stale milk...

4. INSPECT THE INSIDE

Now that the liners have been removed, you will be able to see the polystyrene on the inside of the helmet so you can check it for damage or discolouration that could indicate a weakness in protection.

Give the inside of the shell a wipe round with a baby wipe to clean it out – and remember those little flies that have worked their way in through the vents? You'll be able to see if there are any and get rid of them now.



5. PUT YOUR LINERS BACK IN

Once your liners are dry then you can put them back in and start to reassemble your lid. We have video links on the Shark website for all of our helmets as sometimes people can find getting the liners back in a challenge – but it's all down to practice and knowing the technique.



rot there – lovely thought isn't it? If they don't get through then they just sit in the vent and block the air circulation meaning that the ventilation system isn't working as it should.

I use a small screwdriver wrapped in a cloth to run round the front section to get into the little gaps and around the visor-fitting mechanism.



6. TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR VISOR

Now's the time to inspect your visor for scratches and stone chips that could affect your vision. By regulation visors must have a certain percentage of scratch resistance but this doesn't protect them completely and scratches can't be polished out from the plastic like they can on something like a car door. Scratches are distracting for riders as they can spread the light – especially at night or in bad weather – which can obscure your view.

If the visor is fine then pop it back on – if not, you might want to order a replacement one. Also, if you have a Pinlock fitted or need to put an anti-fog treatment on it, then do it before putting it back on. Anti-fog visors or inserts must be clean to work effectively.



Do's and don'ts

We asked Mark for his top 10 do's and don'ts for everyday helmet care – there are a few things you may be shocked about...

Do

Keep on top of cleaning – it makes it easier in the long run.

Leave the visor open when not in use, this allows the interior to vent and the visor seal/rubber to relax to ensure good fit. Apply a spot of silicone occasionally to keep the seal/rubber soft

Ensure you get a correct fit – a well-fitting helmet means that it will perform at its best. A badly fitting helmet has the ability to change a good ride out to a bad one when you start getting a headache halfway through and have an attractive red mark on your forehead when you get off, or you're constantly repositioning it because it's too big.

Carry it properly – which is by the chinstrap or in its bag – and not by the chinbar. You can damage the rubber and the acid and dirt from your hands can affect the rubber and the inside.

Ask your dealer. Some dealerships can service helmets and carry a range of spare or additional parts – so pick up the phone if you need anything or have any questions.

Use a professional. You shouldn't ever paint your own helmet – unless you're a helmet painter. If you don't mask up all the vents and rubber correctly then the paint fumes can go into vents and disintegrate the inner polystyrene.

Don't

Use a bike cleaner on your helmet – some of the chemicals in them can affect the plastic parts of the helmet such as the visor mechanisms and make them brittle. Always check what the cleaner should be used for – and if you're unsure, then don't use it.

Put your helmet on the fuel tank of your bike – or anywhere near petrol for that matter. Petrol reacts with polystyrene, melting and shrinking it; it doesn't have to make contact either as the fumes can be just as bad.

Keep your helmet on the wing mirror of your bike – the edge of the mirror can damage the

polystyrene on the inside of the helmet through the liner.

Allow your lid to get too hot. The maximum temperature polystyrene can reach before it starts being affected is 60°C. Some people damage helmets by trying to get action camera mounts off – as the technique is to use a hairdryer on low heat/warm – but just be aware of localised temperature. It's worth bearing in mind too if your helmet is kept near a radiator or spotlights.

Assume it will be okay. There's nothing worse than dropping a new lid on the floor. Often riders go into denial and say 'oh it will be okay', but what they don't realise is the damage that's been done inside. Shark runs an inspection service, while the damage might not be evident on the outside, they can check the inside too. It's better to be safe than sorry.





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First Rides

BENELLI BN302



CHINA'S COMING

This Italian/Chinese mix is the first real bike to take the Japanese head on. And for the first time you really can believe the hype. Finally, China looks to have cracked it.

WORDS: Alan Cathcart PHOTOGRAPHY: Stephen Piper

WHAT IS THIS BIKE?

This is the entry by Benelli's Chinese owner QJ into the fast-developing 300-400cc small bore sportbike market, a market that includes Honda's CB300F/CBR300, Kawasaki's Ninja 300 and the new Yamaha YZF-R3. The Benelli is designed in Italy but made in China and undercuts all of them on price. It's the first volume production Chinese motorcycle built to Western standards, with all the faults on the Benelli BN600R, introduced two years ago, now corrected.

Things are hotting up in the 300-400cc lightweight model sector, with established players Honda – with its Thai-made CB300F roadster and full-fairing CBR300 singles – and Kawasaki, whose twin-cylinder Ninja 300 sportbike invented the category and continues to set the pace, now joined by Yamaha with its YZF-R3 Supersport.

And then there's the so-cool, segment-topping KTM RC390 and 390 Duke, both made in India by the Austrian firm's Bajaj partner.

Why are these bikes so popular with the punters and the bike makers? Well, they're affordable, accessible and fun to ride, without needing the skills of Marc Marquez to sort-of tame them for street use. Secondly, they have a huge potential global audience of all ages in every country on the planet, whether as prestige models in developing markets, or as lower cost options in developed ones.

So maybe without really seeing this coming, these big-name contenders for small-bore supremacy are about to have to cope with serious competition from an unlikely source, the latest all-new product from Italy's oldest motorcycle manufacturer, the twin-cylinder Benelli BN302 roadster.

This little pearl in the market is made in China by its owner Qianjiang

(pronounced 'Chin-jung', but called simply QJ by all its staff).

In comparison – especially to the Honda CB300F single which is its closest direct competitor – the new Benelli twin is a more substantial product at slightly less cost – not just because it has twice as many cylinders, but also because it's more spacious, and seemingly more solid and classy-looking in appearance.

Its 795mm seat height means that a 1.80m (5ft 10in) rider doesn't feel cramped on it, and the well-padded and stylish-looking red-stitched seat is comfortable enough for a full day's ride, plus there's adequate passenger space there, too, with two well-designed grab handles mounted on the tail of the bike.

The well-shaped seat narrows sufficiently at the front to make it easy for shorter riders to put their feet down at rest without sacrificing comfort for the rest of us. The wide taper-section steel handlebar's pulled-back grips deliver a fairly upright but still relaxed stance, with your knees tucked in nicely to the flanks of the 16 litre metal fuel tank, and a good view behind you from the graceful-looking mirrors.

The front brake lever is five-way adjustable, but not its counterpart working the cable-operated clutch. Build quality is very high – compared to the BN600R I rode two years ago, the calibre of the paintwork, switchgear, frame welds, metalwork

and plastic components is much improved, and is now fully on a level with anything made in Europe.

I guess that just as with Japan 50 years ago, a nation which originally traded exclusively on price has now learnt that export customers prize affordable quality above all else. Judging by how well made the BN302 I rode was, QJ has got the message and acted on it.

This 300cc motorcycle's liquid-cooled eight-valve parallel-twin engine essentially consists of the BN600R's inline four-cylinder motor sliced in half. The short, compact design running a 12:1 compression ratio sees the double overhead camshafts chain-driven up the left side of the engine, with the six-speed transmission's oil-bath clutch mounted tightly in, and the cylinders inclined forward by 20 degrees, mounted on a robust crankcase.

Fitted with a lambda probe oxygen sensor to optimise the fuelling that's controlled by the American-made Delphi ECU, and a single injector for each of the twin 37mm throttle bodies, the Benelli's parallel-twin motor was developed in Italy by Benelli's R&D team led by chief engineer Stefano Michelotti. It has the same 65 x 45.2mm dimensions as its four-cylinder sister, for a capacity of exactly 300cc, and carries a 180° crankshaft with a single gear-driven counterbalancer.

Specification

BENELLI BN302

Engine: Liquid-cooled, eight-valve, dohc, inline two-cylinder, 300cc

Power: 38bhp @12,000rpm

Torque: 20lb-ft @ 9000rpm

Seat height: 795mm

Front suspension: 41mm upside down forks, 135mm travel

Rear suspension: Cantilever monoshock with hydraulically adjustable preload and spring adjustable preload

Front brakes: Twin 260mm floating discs with two-piston calipers

Rear brakes: 240mm disc. Two-piston floating caliper

Tank size: 16 litre (three litre reserve)

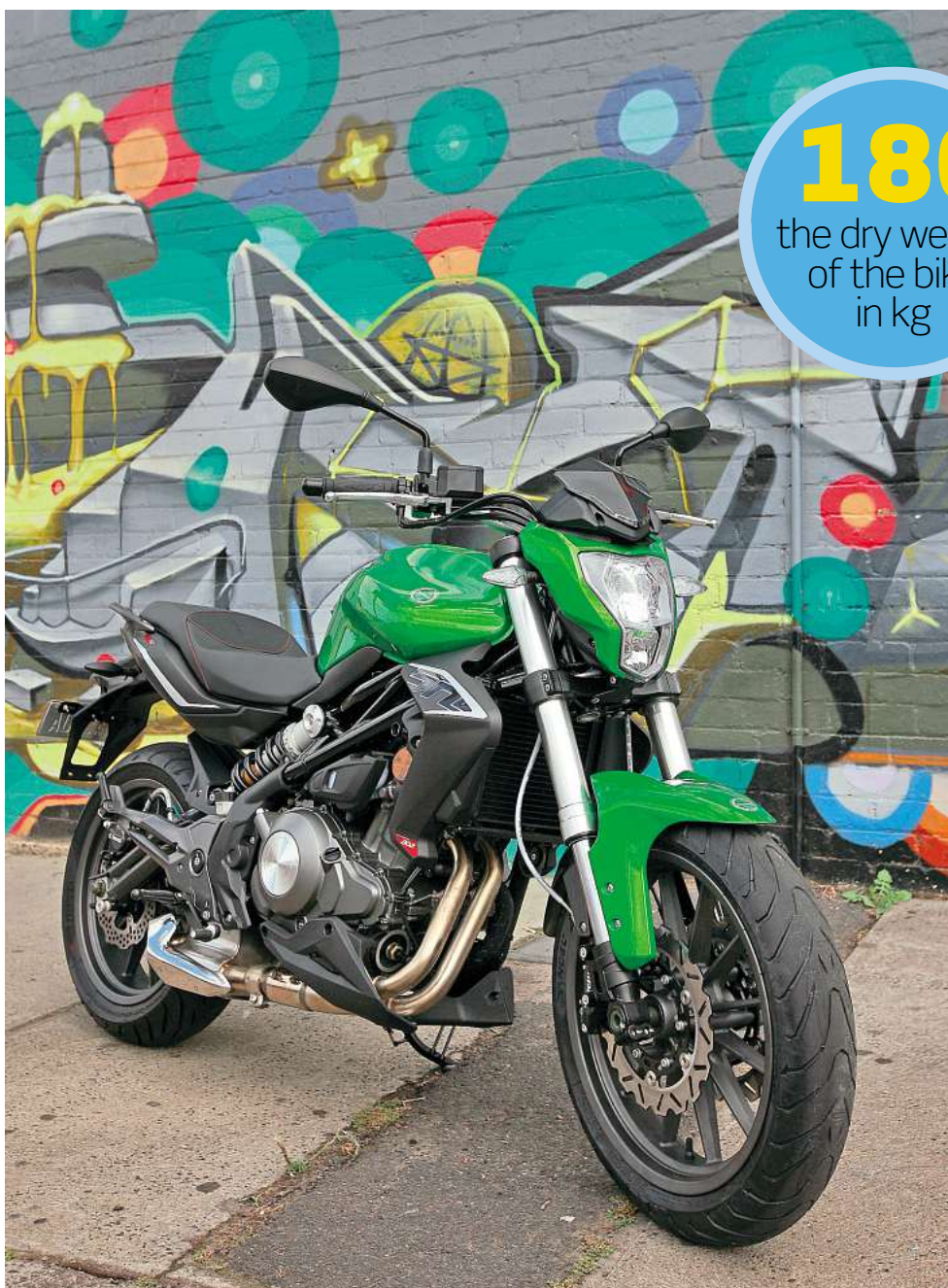
Dry weight: 180kg

Wheelbase: 1405mm

65 x 45.2

the bore and stroke of the parallel twin

RIGHT: The motor, chassis and engine are every bit as good as anything Japanese you'd currently be able to buy.



180

the dry weight of the bike in kg

This results in an engine that turns out to be uncannily smooth when you thumb the starter and it booms immediately into life, settling to a high 1600rpm idle speed with a very individual audio soundtrack of a muted but menacing drone emanating from the catalyst-equipped Euro 3-legal 2-1 exhaust's silencer exiting under your right foot – there is absolutely zero adverse vibration in either seat, handlebar or footrests, presumably aided by the relatively small bar end balance weights.

This makes the Benelli untiring and enjoyable to spend time on, aided by the lightness and precision of the controls – the gearshift is Japanese quality, and the clutch is light to operate with a smooth pickup that'll make the BN302 very entry-level friendly, even if it's much more than just a starter bike, with an output of 38bhp at 12,000rpm, the point at which the rev limiter is set, and a reasonably meaty amount of torque for a small-bore streetrod, with 20lb-ft delivered at 9000rpm.

Fuelling is excellent, a considerable improvement on the BN600R I rode two years ago which had a very jerky pick-up from a closed throttle, perhaps betraying QJ's then-inexperience at throttle mapping. That's history now on the half-size twin, which has an extremely flexible power delivery with smooth and predictable throttle response.

The BN302 will pull wide open in sixth gear from little more than idle speed with zero transmission snatch, though if you want to get a move on it's best to work that sweet-action gearshift



a little, in which case you'll find that the little Benelli's happy zone is from 5000rpm to just over that maximum torque peak. Going up to 6500rpm in top gear equals 60mph, so top speed is probably around 110mph, not that it really matters on a bike like this.

Performance is genuinely invigorating at real world speeds – no matter how long you've been riding, you'll get a kick out of winding up the revs on a motor like the Benelli's which is sporty without being threatening, and has quite enough oomph to excite. But it's also completely accessible for novice riders, in terms of the smooth controllability of the engine. As you may have guessed, I really enjoyed riding it, frankly more than I was expecting to.

A key factor in that enjoyment was the Benelli's equally unexpectedly good handling – this is a light, flickable bike that I can imagine would allow a skilled rider to embarrass others with much more horsepower in the twisties. The BN302 employs a nowadays conventional composite frame using the sturdy engine as a fully stressed member, with a tubular steel upper subframe attached to twin cast aluminium chassis plates, in which the double-sided twin-tube steel swingarm pivots.

It's worth noting that the quality of the aluminium castings is very high, fully on a par with anything made in Europe or Japan, although the axle end of the swingarm has rough welding that's the only cheap-looking aspect of the entire bike. Priced to sell, this doesn't look like a cost-cutting motorcycle in terms of manufacture.

That's especially the case with the seemingly well-made Chinese-sourced running gear fitted to the BN302,

Performance is genuinely invigorating, no matter how long you've been riding for.

rather than its four-cylinder sister's Italian componentry from the likes of Marzocchi, Sachs and Brembo. The upside-down fork offering a plush 135mm of wheel travel that's adjustable for rebound damping is matched to a cantilever rear monoshock offset to the right, and so is readily accessible for spring preload and rebound damping adjustment, but not compression damping.

There's a 1405mm wheelbase (compared to the 1380mm Honda CB300F: see what I mean about substance?) and the twin 260mm floating front wave discs are gripped by four-pot calipers, with a twin-piston caliper and 240mm disc at the rear – all Chinese-sourced, even though bearing the Benelli logo. The good-looking lightweight 12-spoke cast aluminium wheels are shod with Pirelli Sport Angel rubber, a 110/70ZR17 on the 3.50in front, and 140/70ZR17 on the 4.50in rear. Dry weight is 180kg.

Even with what felt like relatively conservative steering geometry (actual numbers remain undisclosed), this is a sharp steering motorcycle which in handling terms does indeed relish hustling through turns on a winding country road. The BN302 is agile yet planted – it's no lightweight minicycle in the way it handles, thanks to its confident steering coupled with inherent stability, which helps it hold a line well at speed even over bumps.

The rear monoshock was quite compliant for what I presume is a budget product, and ride quality is

pretty good for a small, relatively light bike like this. Only the brakes were a little disappointing, necessitating a hard squeeze on the adjustable lever to get the twin front discs to start doing their job, especially from high speed. However, I'll reserve judgement on these till I try them again after being properly bedded in – the bike had just 50km on the clock at the start of my day's ride.

Anyway, the high idle speed means you can use quite a lot of engine braking without running the risk of chattering the rear wheel on the overrun. The Pirelli tyres are a key asset in building confidence, because they warm up quickly and give excellent grip – kudos to QJ for fitting them.

About the only real criticism I have is that the otherwise quite legible dash with an analogue tacho and digital speedo, plus water temp, fuel gauge, clock, mileage and single trip readings, doesn't have a gear selected indicator, as every single KTM model made in India does from 125cc upwards. For a bike like this where you'll use the gearbox a lot it's a must-have, especially for novice riders who run an even greater risk of getting lost and not being sure which gear they're in.

This is a very user-friendly and capable riding package which inspires confidence at any speeds, but especially when you start riding it harder, for there's more

ABOVE: Digital dash shows almost everything you need but there's no gear selected indicator, which is annoying.

38

the amount of bhp kicked out at 12,000rpm

300

the cc of the engine, it's perfectly suited for new riders

First Rides

SUSPENSION

Upside-down fork has 135mm of travel and can give rebound damping, the cantilever rear monoshock is mounted off-centre to the right and has spring preload and rebound damping adjustment.

FRAME

Composite frame using the engine as a fully stressed member. The subframe is a tubular steel upper attached to twin cast aluminium chassis plates which also provide the swingarm pivot points.

FUELLING

Controlled by a Delphi ECU there's a single injector for each of the twin 37mm throttle bodies.

BRAKES

Up front the twin 260mm floating front wave discs get four-pot calipers. There's a twin-piston caliper and 240mm disc at the rear.



WHEELS AND TYRES

Lightweight 12-spoke cast aluminium wheels wear Pirelli Sport Angel tyres. A 110/70ZR17 on the 3.50in front and 140/70ZR17 on the 4.50in rear.

ENGINE

300cc, liquid-cooled eight-valve parallel-twin (half the Benelli BN600R's inline four-cylinder motor) with a 12:1 compression ratio. Double overhead camshafts chain-driven up the left side of the engine. Cylinders inclined forward by 20 degrees.

than enough performance to make the Benelli BN302 twin fun to ride, without ever being threatening, just pleasurable. Though it's still uncertain when it'll arrive, a fully faired version is surely coming as a competitor to the Ninja 300 best-seller, but Urban Moto is already planning a Benelli BN302 one make race series Down Under, if necessary using this Naked roadster as the basis.

QJ management's strategy in acquiring Benelli a decade ago was to position their company as a contender in the global marketplace by obtaining an existing Western two-wheeled brand, then using its product development expertise to produce a technically and stylistically more sophisticated range of motorcycles to be manufactured in China, rather than trying to concoct something in-house that was a big step up in engineering terms from anything they'd done before.

So that's the rationale behind the creation of the Benelli BN302, which was designed and initially developed in Italy in collaboration with QJ engineers, before it was transferred to China for final pre-production development and, ultimately, manufacture.

Italian flair coupled with Chinese manufacturing costs and an increasing emphasis on quality equals big trouble for little ol' Japan, even when they offshore production to Thailand or Malaysia.

The Benelli BN302 is a very serious contender in the small bore sportsbike stakes – but even more to the point, it signals that at long last China's coming to the global marketplace with affordable products that are well conceived, well designed and well made.

Had to happen sooner or later...



Closest Rival



HONDA CBR300R £4299

30bhp and just under 20lb-ft of torque make the Honda a little less attractive than the Benelli on paper, but there's no denying the bike's poise, bigger-bike feel and all-round ability on the road.

There are touches like the right-way-up forks (non-adjustable) and the preload-only adjustable rear shock that are eclipsed by the Italian/Chinese bike, and the bike is probably going to be flat out at about 90mph with everything you can tuck in tucked in – but this is still a very enjoyable bike to ride.

On top of that there's the excellent styling of the CBR; let's face it this bike looks properly like a little Fireblade and that's something that's likely to appeal quite highly to the younger, or newer end of the market.

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TOURING

Your rides ♦ Our rides ♦ Tips and tricks

Lawrey's lava near miss

A lucky break saves round-the-world rider Rhys Lawrey in Chile and he dines on guinea pig in Peru...



Chile nearly got too hot too handle for Rhys Lawrey, when the country's most active volcano erupted, throwing ash and lava 1000m into the air!

Rhys explains: "I'd been camping in the National Park near the Villarrica volcano and decided that I should leave a day earlier than planned."

"I woke the next morning to see on the news that the volcano had erupted."

Before entering Chile, Rhys crossed the equator in Ecuador: "Seeing a reading of all zeros on the

GPS is a weird feeling. I stopped the bike and started jumping from the northern hemisphere to the southern and back again."

Next came Peru, where he experienced the culinary delight of guinea pig for the first time, along with some of the worst weather of the entire trip.

"Peru's an amazing country and I really like it - incredible mountains and tunnels. I arrived in Arequipa city to be greeted by torrential rain and the worst floods I've even ridden in," he said.

"Water was coming at me from all directions, running off the roofs and straight on to the road

(or you, if you're riding on it). Water was coming up to my knees and the streets are pebble covered, so it's treacherous".

Now in country number 32, Rhys is 36,000 miles into his record-breaking ride: "Chile keeps changing, from barren desert in the north, through the densely populated central region around Santiago and into the lush green mountains and lakes below."

From Chile Rhys heads into Patagonia, in Argentina, to visit Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. You can follow his progress and watch his video diaries at: www.2mororider.com



80

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-  Head north-west towards Wainfleet Road/A52, go 52ft, then turn left on to Wainfleet Road/A52 and go 259ft.


-  Keep right to continue on Berry Way/A52 and go 404ft, then a slight left on to Lincoln Road and travel for 1.1 miles.


-  Turn left on to Burgh Road/A158 and follow A158 for 5.5 miles.


-  At the roundabout, take the third exit on to Bluestone Heath Road/A1028 and follow A1028 for 5.4 miles.


-  At the roundabout, take the second exit on to Bluestone Heath Road/A16 and follow A16 for 16.6 miles.


-  Turn left on to Pear Tree Lane/A18 and follow A18 for 9.9 miles, then at the roundabout take the second exit on to Barton Street/A18 and follow A18 for 11.8 miles.


-  At the roundabout, take the third exit on to A15 and travel for 10.3 miles. This will take you over the Humber Bridge (toll bridge).


-  At the roundabout, take the second exit on to A164 and follow A164 for 9.4 miles. Total travelled so far - 70.1 miles.


 -  Turn right on to Hengate and travel for 0.1 miles, then continue on to Norwood/A1174 and follow A1174 for 0.9 miles.

 -  At the roundabout, take the second exit on to Hull Bridge Road/A1035 and follow A1035 for 4.8 miles.

 -  At the roundabout, take the second exit on to A165 and follow A165 for 37 miles.

 -  At the roundabout, take the second exit on to High Street/A171 and follow A171 for 15.1 miles.

 -  Turn right on to Spital Bridge and go 0.2 miles, then continue on to Church Street and go 0.4 miles.

 -  Church Street turns slightly left and becomes Bridge Street, go 482ft, then slight left on to New Quay Road for 148ft.
- Whitby, North Yorkshire.**
Total miles travelled - 137.

About the route

This route takes the rider from one seaside town to another via the stunning scenery of the Lincolnshire Wolds and the North Yorkshire Moors. More information about the route in the It's Not Bikes... section.



Whitby Abbey

Top Event

APRIL 25-26

The 35th Carole Nash International Classic Motorcycle Show, Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford, Staffordshire ST18 0BD

Gates open: 9am-6pm Saturday, 9am-5pm Sunday

The Carole Nash International Classic Motorcycle Show is still going strong and well into its fourth decade.

Visitors will have plenty to explore at Staffordshire County Showground with many stunning display machines with the very best that classic British motorcycling has to offer, in this traditional spring spectacular.

As usual there will be several halls of displays plus outside areas which will be packed with trade stands and autojumble pitches. These will be joined by classic motorcycle clubs, exciting live action, classic off-road machines, the Bonhams' spring sale plus special guest stars.

For more information and to buy advanced discounted tickets, visit www.classicbikeshows.com or telephone 01507 529529.



It's not bikes...

As this route covers a whole range of different places and activities/things to do, this section could not be narrowed down to just one place.

At the roundabout where you take the exit to Bluestone Heath/A1028, take the first exit and visit Gunby Hall (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/gunby-hall, 01754 890102). This is a country house, dating from the 1700s, with gardens to look round as well (Hall is closed on Thursdays/Fridays).

Following the route north, you will arrive at the Humber Bridge, which when it opened on June 24, 1981, it was the world's longest single-span suspension bridge. Over on the north bank, there is a car park where you can stop for a coffee and a rest.

Another interesting place to visit in Hull is The Deep (www.thedeep.co.uk). This is one of the UK's largest aquariums and is home to various species of fish, sharks, rays, turtles and a colony of penguins.

The route then takes in Beverley, a market town famous for its Minster, then it is on to Bridlington and then up the coastal road, past Filey, to Scarborough.

In Scarborough, there is plenty to see and do (www.visitscarborough.com), the Sealife Centre, Peasholm Park, the harbour and the race track at Oliver's Mount (www.oliversmountracing.com, 01723 373000). There is also Scarborough Castle (www.english-heritage.co.uk/daysout/properties/scarborough-castle), the castle was built on the headland which separates the North and South Bays.

After leaving Scarborough, take the A171 north, which takes you through the scenic North Yorkshire Moors National Park, towards the final stop on this route, Whitby.

Whitby (www.visitwhitby.com) is probably most famous for its Abbey (www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/whitby-abbey), which is set on the East Cliff and helped to inspire Bram Stoker's Dracula. It can be reached by climbing the 199 steps which lead up to the ruins.

There are also plenty of galleries, museums, shops and historic buildings to visit.



Scarborough castle

About the rider

This route was sent in by Pip Burman who, after a break of over 40 years from riding motorcycles, has recently got back to riding them again. His interest in motorcycling, though, has never gone away.

Since getting his bike (and going on a refresher course), he has been riding around and clocking up the miles whenever he gets chance. This route is one of his favourites, as it takes the rider the scenic way to Scarborough and Whitby, riding along fantastic roads with plenty of bends.

EVENTS

April 2015

- | | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|--|
| 3 | Classic Bike & Car Meet,
The Victoria, Coalville, Leics LE67 3FA. Tel 01530 814718. www.vicbikerspub.co.uk | 12 | Gotherington, near Cheltenham, Glos GL5 9RD.
www.prescottbikefestival.co.uk |
| 4 | South Midlands Autojumble,
Ross-on-Wye Livestock Centre HR9 7QQ. John Harding 01989 750731. Email: johnharding197@live.co.uk | 12 | 'Normous Newark,
Newark Showground, Nottinghamshire NG24 2NY. www.newarkautojumble.co.uk |
| 4-6 | British Superbikes
Donington Park GP. www.britishsuperbike.com | 15 | Classic Motorcycle Show,
Yorkshire Waterways Museum, Dutch River Side, Goole DN14 5TB. Tel 01405 768730. |
| 5 | Classic Motorcycle Show,
Tile Shop, Buntingford. Tel 07963 609143 | 17 | Charterhouse Classic Cars,
Motorcycles and Automobilia Auction, Royal Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6QN. 01935 812277 |
| 5-6 | 28th Weston Park Transport Show,
Weston Park, Weston Under Lizard, Shropshire TF11 8PX. www.transtarpromotions.co.uk | 17 | Classic Bike & Car Meet,
The Victoria, Coalville, Leics LE67 3FA. Tel 01530 814718. www.vicbikerspub.co.uk |
| 6 | Ashford Classic Motorcycle Show & Bikejumble.
Ashford Market, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent TN24 0HB. Tel 01797 344277 www.elk-promotions.co.uk | 18 | Scorton Giant Auto/Bike Jumble,
North Yorkshire Events Centre DL10 6EH. Bert 07909 904705. |
| 8 | Sports Bike Night,
Fox Inn, Ulceby. www.lincolnshirebikenights.com | 18 | Lincs BTSC Mill Run
from Coningsby Moorside. Bob or Maureen 01526 345270 |
| 10 | Classic Bike & Car Meet,
The Victoria, Coalville, Leics LE67 3FA. Tel 01530 814718. www.vicbikerspub.co.uk | 22 | Sports Bike Night,
Rose and Crown, Upton. www.lincolnshirebikenights.com |
| 11 | Motorcycle Autojumble,
Hempstead, Gloucester GL2 5LE. Paul Powell 07831 421455. | 23 | St George's Night Special,
Ace Cafe London NW10 7UD. www.ace-cafe-london.com |
| 11-12 | Prescott Bike Festival,
Prescott Hill Climb, | 23-26 | VMCC (Essex) 6th Bluebell Weekend,
Museum of Power, Langford, near Maldon. Heather/Roger Gulliver 01621 892606. www.vmcc-essex.co.uk |
| | | 24 | VMCC (Essex) Byways Run.
Dick Hobart 01245 473359. Social Run (End over End) Roger Gulliver 01621 892606 |
| | | 25-26 | The 35th Carole Nash International Classic Motorcycle Show,
Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford ST18 0BD www.classicbikeshows.com |
| | | 26 | SBMOC Classic Bike Show & Bike Jumble,
Newhaven Fort, East Sussex. Tel 01903 247245 |
| | | 26 | Autojumble,
Manchester Road, Rixton, near Warrington WA3 6EA. T Taylor 07860 648103 |
| | | 29 | Sports Bike Night,
Jolly Miller, Wrawby. www.lincolnshirebikenights.com |

If you would like your group or event to appear in these pages, please email the details of the route you think our readers would be interested in and information about your group to: jclements@mortons.co.uk



GET LOST

Don't let fears ruin your motorcycling. Getting lost isn't such a bad thing.

WORDS: Richard Millington PHOTOS: Mortons Archive

Why do so many people have a fear of getting lost? It is not a new phenomenon. I can recall arguments between my parents in the car on those never ending summer holidays. Mum with the map, dad driving and furious that we were lost again. What is it in our psyche that makes so many of us fear getting lost?

In an era where it seems just about anything can be a phobia, it is surprising that the fear of being lost doesn't have a proper name. It has been referred to as mazeophobia, but this is not an official or medical name or diagnosis.

Strangely it seems in this era of GPS and smart phones we are actually becoming more frightened of being lost. Presumably because it happens less often with the technology we

have to aid us. This technology though can also be a hindrance.

I know lots of people who now ride with a GPS on their bike but no map, or at least no map visible to them when riding. This complete reliance on technology is a mistake. A map is easier to read, larger and can tell you lots more than the GPS. Use both in conjunction and you have a good chance of sticking to the plan.

The problem with getting lost is the act of being lost makes the situation worse. It is not one of those things that you fear and then when it happens you think 'oh that wasn't so bad'.

"Once the alarm response is activated, you lose some ability in the rational part of your brain," says Luana Marques, a clinical psychologist.

"That doesn't mean you can't make rational decisions, but your ability to think clearly and logically in the moment becomes less and less."

The very act of being lost makes the fear

increase and you are at greater risk of making poor decisions. We have all seen someone make a terrible decision in the moment of being lost. I did it in Ecuador once. Suddenly trying to get back to a client who I had seen turn off route. A quick look meant I didn't appreciate the speed of the green Renault 18, so I turned out right in front of it. No collision, but due to the poor road surface I did get to watch as the car did a full 360 spin with all four wheels locked up. Very Hollywood. My fault, but fortunately no harm was done other than a slightly irate car driver's blood pressure going overly high for a moment or two.

The fear of being lost is somehow exacerbated on tour. You have a carefully planned route to take in great roads, interesting places and nice coffee stops, but this doesn't mean the tour route is the only route. Things change and with the best will in the world no one can pre-ride every alternative road to check

Turn off the satnav, stick the paper map in the panniers and just follow your nose. Do that and you'll find a whole part of the world that you never knew existed, only discovered by a bit of random chance and - we reckon - probably really enjoyable.

Meet Richard...



Richard Millington has been riding for more than 30 years and touring for over 25. His two-wheeled passion for travel kicked off in the 1980s, with a memorable first trip on which his Suzuki GSX1100EFE's exhaust set fire to his soft panniers. Since then, he's never looked back, fuelled by his involvement in the motor industry. Richard has turned his passion into a business, founding Motorrad Tours. He's ridden on five continents and guided motorcycle tours in Europe, Africa and North and South America. www.motorrad-tours.com offers a range of tours throughout Europe and around the world with something for every taste.

for slightly curvier bends or nicer coffee. It is a great route and it will deliver an enjoyable day in the saddle. The problem is now you feel lost if at any point you are off the route. When you are just heading for a town or hotel at the end of the day then you are only lost when you can't find it. When you are following a route there is the chance to feel lost every time you deviate from it. Your opportunity to be lost has increased exponentially.

So how do we overcome this fear? Psychologists' rule of thumb seems to be "approach not avoid". Go out and get lost on purpose, when it really doesn't matter. Pick a day to go for a ride and get lost. Take your map and GPS but pack them away and turn them off. They are your safety blanket. Go and ride towards places you like the sound of but don't know where they are. Then, when it is time to head for home try to get home using other methods instead of the map and GPS.

Do that oh so radical thing that so many of us hate – stop and ask someone for directions. See if you can follow them. At the end of the day try to relax and enjoy the situation for what it is. You may come across some great roads, pretty villages or a nice pub. Recognise that this ride has taken you to places and allowed you to see things that you may never have done without getting lost.

Once you have learned to relax about it, then the other thing you can do is to protect yourself better from getting lost. Learn to read a map properly and use the mass of information it contains. Learn which maps to buy and why they are better than others. Possibly most importantly in this era, learn how to use your GPS. I don't mean how to ask it to take you to aunty Doris's postcode for tea, but actually how to use it. How to plot a route, what it does if you miss a waypoint along the route, how to adjust a route when out and

about and, in the worst-case scenario, how to give up and just ask it to take you directly to the destination, before you are too late, the tea goes cold and aunty Doris calls the coastguard in a wild overreaction.

I have a friend, Dave, who was an early adopter of GPS on bikes back in the days of small screens and no such thing as Bluetooth. On a bright Sunday morning he would get on his bike and zoom out, and out, and out on the map. Scroll to a rural area with no towns nearby, touch the screen, press go and select "shortest" route. B-roads and back lanes abounded. No idea where he was going until the GPS announced, "You have arrived". Then he would do it again until it was time to head for home. Lost from morning to evening, he had some great rides, found some lovely roads and beautiful scenery all the while enjoying the best side of being lost. Try it, it's a great way to spend a Sunday.



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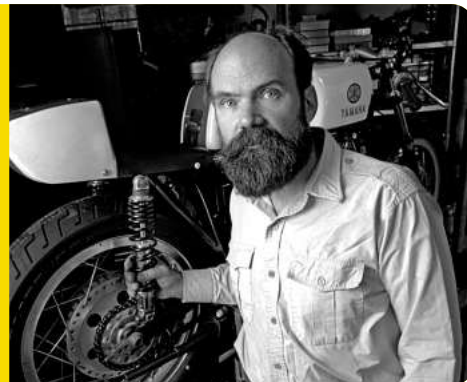
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Kevin Cameron



It was not always so. Looking back to the early days of US AMA Superbike, powerful but musclebound 1025cc Kawasakis and Suzukis were often defeated by better-handling European Ducatis, Guzzis, or even BMWs. A high top speed is useless if your bike begins weaving before you can reach it. Japanese

designers would correct these problems through the 1980s.

Even before that era, the production-based motorcycles that duked it out in American racing were handicapped, either by tradition or by design-to-pricepoint. Great rivals of the 1950s and 60s were Edward Turner's Triumph 500 twin (pushrods, flexing two-bearing crankshaft), Harley's side-valve 750 KR (agricultural design, strangled side-valve gas flow), and BSA's classic Gold Star 500 single (pushrods, big blow-ups).

American racing success was essential to British bike sales success, but required persistent and effective politicking within the American Motorcycle Association's rules committee. Norton's overhead cam singles were fast in the late 1940s but they lacked the political hp to fight off an ohc ban. BSA brought a fleet of singles and twins to Daytona in 1954 and finished 1-2-3-4-5, but it was Triumph who offered a comprehensive catalogue of tuning parts and information. Anyone who wanted a fast Triumph always had the basics available in those years.

Just as Brooklands and the TT were the twin wellsprings of British motorcycle design before the Hitler War, so in the postwar US it was dirt-track, Southern California, and in particular, the half-mile track known as 'Ascot Park'. One after another great riding talent came to flower on this scene, supported by a cadre of talented tuners and builders in the surrounding area. One of them was Albert Gunter, who bucked the rigid frame 'true believers' by making them eat his rear-suspended dust. He also post-cured tyres for dirt track use, hardening them by weeks of rooftop sunlight or, if there wasn't time, in pizza ovens.

As the 1960s unwound, Triumph twins grew more capable and muscular. At first, the work was mostly private, then centred on Triumph's east- and west-coast distributors. As the little twin closed in on success, the factory in Meriden took over, with engineer Doug Hele leading. A 500 twin designed for racing today would be half of a 250hp 16,500rpm MotoGP engine, with 81 x 48.5mm bore and stroke, pneumatic valves, plain bearings, liquid cooling.

But that was 50 years in the future. From 1959, the Triumph was 69 x 65.5, and incremental work advanced its peak revs toward 9000. Steady development brought

Today we expect sports motorcycle engines to be raceable. Years of World Superbike and other production-based race series have seen to that.

it near the 50hp that the Manx Norton singles had been credited with for years. And then, in 1962, 1966, and 1967 Triumphs managed to win the Daytona 200, rudely interrupting seamless Harley dominance.

Harley did fight back, but its sidevalve rout of the Triumphs in 1968-69 was really based upon an accidental discovery, made in the shop of C R Axtell, one of that cadre of Southern California builders. Harley did fund development of a really good fairing in the Cal Tech wind tunnel, and added a second motor-mower carburetor, but the accident was what won those races.

Several racers were in C R Axtell's dyno shop one day during the off-season at the end of 1967. There was a sidevalve Harley KR awaiting work, and it was decided to pull the heads off it to have a look. What they saw didn't square with their experience of race-tuned sidevalve engines such as the big 300cu in sixes that had once made Hudson a brand to reckon with in US stock-car racing.

The Hudson had plenty of room for gas flow around its valves, and the pathway from the valves over and down into the cylinder was generous and smooth. On the KR Harley, however, the head tightly enclosed the valves, and passage to the cylinder beside them was quite restricted; it was as though seeking high compression had taken priority over airflow.

Someone said: "Let's put quarter-inch head gaskets on that thing and see what happens." Spacing the heads up a quarter-inch would open up airflow paths but would drastically lower compression. On test, the opened-up engine – despite such low compression – made the same power as the stocker. They knew they were onto something. A little more work and power gains began to roll in. They phoned Dick O'Brien, Harley's racing manager, who got on the next flight out. The ultimate result was an overall gain of 8hp.

That was a time when sanctioning bodies made a race out of what was out there, rather than engineers designing something that could win. That being so, improvisation, accidents, and hunches took the place of today's computer simulations and vehicle dynamics models.

Who is Cameron?

Kevin is one of the most widely-respected technical gurus on the planet. Author of some of the most iconic and landmark books in motorcycle publishing, Cameron brings the innermost workings of what goes on in an engine to the fore in an easy-to-access way. Simply put, Kevin Cameron is a genius of all things metal that are fixed to two wheels

Specific tastes for specific tastes



Maynard Hershon

After 52 years riding sports-style motorcycles, somehow I can now picture myself on a cruiser. A Guzzi cruiser. What's come over me? In January, before that fever fully took hold, I had new seals and bushings put in my Kawasaki's fork, and new sprockets and chain installed.

The mechanic found the steering head and wheel bearings to be just fine. And the brake pads to have lots of life left in them. I have a new battery, several oil filters and a new rear tyre set aside. The ZRX is ready for another year or so of trouble-free use at minimal expense.

I can only afford to own one bike at a time. So to buy a Guzzi, I would have to sell my Kawasaki or trade it in. I fought with myself about replacing it. There was no compelling reason to do so. It's a lovely bike. And I couldn't even tell you precisely why I wanted a Guzzi. I just... did.

After scouring the Guzzi Owners' Club classified ads, plus ads on the internet from owners and dealers, I found a used bike I thought I might like, offered by a dealer in far-off Minnesota. I saw the listing on an internet bike-sales site called CycleTrader dot com.

Dealers list all their inventory, new and used, on these websites. Too often, the dealer descriptions are absolutely unhelpful, merely manufacturer advertising copy applicable to any example of that particular model.

We know that all new bikes of a given make and model are alike, and that no two used bikes are. Still, the dealers listing the bikes don't bother to add comments about the bike-in-question. Maybe they hope you will imagine that all used bikes are alike too. Who knows?

I looked at the photos half a dozen times. The bike looked good, low-mileage and clean. The seller was in fact a Guzzi dealer, a good sign, I guess. Days passed. I felt that if I followed up on the ad, if I contacted the dealer, I'd be committing to sell or trade my fine, trustworthy Kawi for a bike I knew almost nothing about. I resisted.

But the seventh time I returned to the site to look at the photos, I asked the dealer how much my trade was worth. CycleTrader provides an icon; you enter the make, model and year of your trade, and click on the icon.

I heard via email from a salesperson at the shop, also by the way a Kawasaki store. He wanted to know more about my trade. How many miles? How did it look? You can imagine the questions. I wrote back,

Maynard wants a Moto Guzzi. That's a Moto Guzzi, not some specific Moto Guzzi.

telling him about the good tyres, the new seals and bushings, the new chain and sprockets, and the mileage, 37,000 miles.

My ZRX is an 04, you may recall. Thirty-eight thousand miles is 3800 per year. Surely many 10-year-old litre-plus motorcycles show far more miles on their odometers. No?

He wrote back to tell me he thought my bike was worth about \$2000.

I stared at the number in his email. Maybe I hoped my bike might bring \$1000 more than that. Even \$1500. Two thousand subtracted from the price of the Guzzi left thousands to pay.

I know I could sell my bike for more than \$2000. But his offer was a rude awakening, a hint that my ZRX had become worth as little as it was likely to. On the one hand, it was a shock. On the other, it was a liberation.

I would love to be able to buy bikes like mine for \$2000 each. I'll take three, please. My ZRX is worth far more to me as a thing to ride than it is to Joe Dealer as a thing to sell, a unit of pre-owned inventory. I suppose the make, model, year and mileage tell a story, but when you've heard that story, you don't really know the bike. You definitely don't know MY bike.

I realised that I was not going to sell or trade my motorcycle. It will not bring nearly enough money to help me afford a desirable, different bike. It will not even bring enough money to buy another ZRX, same year and mileage, that I could trust as I do mine.

I'd been checking the Guzzi Owners' Club classified ads once or twice daily. And I'd check both Craigslist and CycleTrader just as often. I've removed the bookmarks from those sites. I'm not going to look at photos of transverse V-twins I cannot buy.

You know, I think I get a little unhinged in the winter. I think that once spring comes and snow stops falling, once I can ride again, I will fall back in love with my Kawasaki. It will be my steadfast friend again, my partner in adventures near and far. I'll forget my mad flirtation with those idiosyncratic Italian motorcycles.

You'll be pleased to hear that I haven't looked at a Guzzi ad all morning. Maybe I'm over it already.

Who is Hershon?

MSL's Maynard is our man with a very unique view on motorcycling from both sides of the pond. Yes, he is American, yes, he does ride around on a second-hand Kawasaki that causes him grief... and yes, he does have his finger right on the pulse of life on two wheels

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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY Peter Henshaw

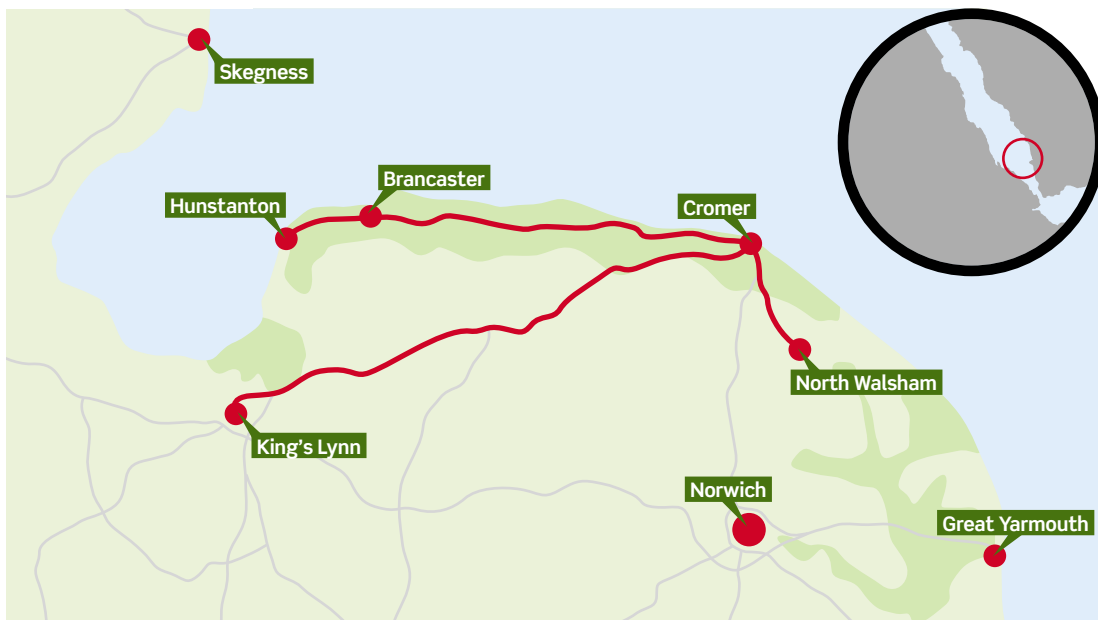


ABOVE: Nice coastline, but the sea's eating it away.

RIGHT: Ex-Vietnam Wash Monsters aren't as scary as they look.



BELOW: Posh end of Hunstanton.



This is a ride of two halves, or it could be three, because the first 16 miles are followed by a twisty bumble along the Norfolk coast, then faster roads back across country to King's Lynn.

Either way, that's where this ride begins, and it's not an auspicious start, though the town library looks very fine.

From the middle of Lynn, follow signs for A149 Cromer out of town, and remember that road number because you'll be sticking with it for more than 50 miles.

At a hilltop roundabout outside town, turn left to stay on the A149, and you're presented with a wide, straight piece of Tarmac rejoicing in the name Queen Elizabeth Way, which sounds a bit incongruous until you see the signs to Sandringham; one of Her Majesty's country pads.

The surface is smoother than a spin doctor's tonsils, but to be honest a bit boring, running straight through fairly featureless countryside. Not only that, but there's no sign of the sea. If you can't wait for a first sea view, take a left for Shepherd's Port or Heacham, and further on every other road on the left seems to be signed to a beach, seafront or nature reserve.

But for an authentically tacky seafront experience, head down to Hunstanton (left at the first roundabout to avoid the A149 bypass). Straight over another roundabout to a dead end and a walk along the seafront. Pause to see the Wash Monsters, ex-US Army landing craft, as used in Vietnam. Each powered by a pair of Caterpillar V8 diesels, they would look fierce even without the painted snarling teeth. In Hunstanton, they



take tourists out to sea for seal watching, and there's even talk of a ferry service across The Wash to Skegness.

Back on the bike, retrace your steps to the roundabout, turn left and Hunstanton's seafront morphs into a genteel resort of green swards and stately old hotels, a bit like a mini-Eastbourne. The road follows the cliff top with sea views (which when you think about it is what you expect from the top of a cliff) and past a headless lighthouse to re-join the A149 on the edge of town.

The A-road gets more interesting now. It's not quick, but a lot more varied than Her Majesty's highway to Sandringham. It shrinks to the width of a B road, losing its white line in places as it twists between fields on the right and marshes to the left. Villages of flinty cottages and churches come and go, the road often so hemmed in we're down to a 20mph limit. Look out for the vintage AA call box at Brancaster, near another lovely church. It's all very nice, but as a south coast boy I can't get used to the sea being to the north...

If you're into bird watching, you'll be spoilt for choice down on the marshes that separate us from the sea. I bypassed Wells-next-the-Sea, where the quay is said to be nice, with access to yet more marshes for birding or gazing at Norfolk's big sky. Just the other side of town, the road drops down on to the marshes and after twisting through Stiffkey (another 20mph limit) opens out onto faster straights interspersed with a few more twisty bits.

Head on through Sheringham to Cromer, where you follow the one-way system through town and finally leave the A149, taking a left signed for Overstrand. There's no road number (though it has one) and this one takes you on along the coast, up and down through woodlands with occasional glimpses of sea. In the middle of Mundesley turn right – again no road number, but it's signed for North Walsham to start the second half of this ride, or is it the third?

We do get an opportunity to open up a bit after those 20 limits and seaside scenics, but not just yet, because the road is a slow old thing to North Walsham with lots of 90°



TOP: Oh we do like to be beside... etc, etc.

ABOVE: Aylsham really does have a thatched village pump.

TOP RIGHT: Churches give a whole new meaning to flintstones.

ABOVE RIGHT: A149 makes its curvy way to Wells-next-the-Sea.



BELOW: B1145 makes for a faster romp back across country.

bends and zero overtaking opportunities. It might not have had a number at Mundesley, but this is the B1145 and we'll be following it all the way back to King's Lynn, crossing the bigger roads that radiate out from Norwich.

So right and left again to cross the A149 at North Walsham, and a few miles further turn left at the lights on to the A140 – you used to be able to go straight across, but they've blocked it off. Instead, it's a quick blast down the Aylsham bypass to a roundabout, where it's straight on for the B1145 or turn right into town and park up in the square for a coffee. If you've done that, follow your nose out of town and fork left at the old village pump, which has a thatched roof. Now come on, a thatched village pump? It can't be real – must have been put there by the tourist board circa 1974.

Once out of town, itchy throttle hands can finally relax as the B-road opens out, especially after crossing the A1067, where it's wide and well surfaced enough to be a military thoroughfare. Well, Norfolk is – or was – the land of the USAF base.

The straight bits are interspersed with twisties, but really this 55-mile B-road is pretty fast and open all the way to King's Lynn. What I can't tell you is that I was taking advantage of it, because the Gladius' fuel light was flashing for much of the way, and I didn't see a single filling station between Sheringham and Gayton, just a few miles outside King's Lynn. Fill up beforehand and you'll be fine.



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 **Mid Ride**



EL TOMOS

ABOVE: Catalanian flag celebrates reaching the Med, but they've a long way to go yet.

Touring Spain by moped? It can be done, but you need one each...

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: Andres Sotos-Castello

It's the summer of 1978 and I finally pluck up the courage to approach a neighbour who has an ageing Puch Maxi sitting in his garden, slowly being reclaimed by the undergrowth. He lets me have the bike for nothing as long as I promise to get it started and use it. A weekend of fixing, fettling and teenage bodging see it running. For six months that bike was my everyday transport and I loved it.

Then I read somewhere that if you increased the size of the ports and fitted an expansion chamber a two-stroke would go faster. Out came the files and a borrowed FS1E spanny and all was good for at least a mile, until the little Puch went bang. That was my first foray into bikes and I was hooked, big time.

Fast forward to October 2013 and my wife Amanda and I are sharing a bottle of wine on the ferry down to Bilbao. I'm reading a bike magazine and there's a small article on the Tomos XL Classic and how it's now being sold in the UK. Essentially, it's a Puch Maxi, and I just





knew I had to have one. A few more glasses of wine and a plan was hatched; we would buy two Tomos XLs, Amanda would take her CBT and we would have an adventure.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

So, here we are, September 2014, the two little mopeds are being loaded into the back of a van and we're on our way to Portsmouth to catch the Bilbao ferry.

The plan is to ride from Bilbao to my parents' place just above Tarragona. Hang around for a few days' R&R and then head back to Santander for the ferry home. We would try to keep to back roads as much as possible and, of course, motorways were not an option (well, that was the plan). We reckoned that 120 miles a day felt doable but we would have to see if the bikes were up to it. For the average RT/Trophy/Pan Euro rider 120 miles in a day doesn't sound like much, but the Tomos are designed for short hops of a few miles at a time, at a top speed of 28mph.

It's early morning and as we clamber out on to the car deck and the two Tomos' are sitting there looking oh so cool, but quite incongruous, surrounded by a sea of big touring bikes. Not for the last time do they become the centre of attention, the subject of many questions and a fair bit of banter.

Our first challenge, and in fact biggest, was getting across the Cambrian mountains that surround Bilbao and Santander. That, and avoiding the elevated motorways that lead out of Bilbao's port. Thanks to my excellent map reading skills we ended up trapped on a motorway, riding on the hard shoulder heading the wrong way to Santander. Oh, and trying not to get



The bikes

The Tomos XL45 Classic is pretty much the same moped that Tomos of Slovenia has been building since the early 70s, and still does. It's a lightweight, chrome-laden, 49cc two-stroke, with auto-lube oiling (so no mixing petrol and oil in the tank). For all the bling, it's still a moped, and limited to 28mph. We averaged 110mpg and were using around £4 worth of unleaded a day with about a litre of oil for the whole trip, so it was cheap travelling.

We didn't do much to the bikes before heading off, just added some crude brackets to the rear rack (a combination of welding and zip ties). These were for the rather snazzy 'Victoria Pendleton' bicycle panniers, which probably suited the Tomos' better than a full set of Givi or Touratech luggage.

Spares consisted of spark plugs, an inner tube, puncture repair kit and some basic tools. We did get two punctures, but other than that all the bikes needed were fuel and oil.

TOP LEFT: Pretty, very pretty, and yes, the mopeds are slightly different colours.

BELOW: When you've climbed 1000 metres on one of these, you celebrate the fact.

blown off the road by the constant stream of passing juggernauts. By the time we got off the motorway, the centre of Bilbao during rush hour was a breeze for both bikes, not to mention Amanda, who having just passed her CBT was on the steepest of learning curves.

That just left the mountains. Rolling hills led to valleys surrounded by slab-sided towers of rock and the flowing, sinuous road soon started to climb...and climb. The mopeds slowed... and slowed, so much so that were passed by an embarrassing number of cyclists. In fact, slow enough that we eventually had to stop and let them cool right down. Slow enough that mechanical sympathy meant that they were pushed up the last kilometre to the summit. Still, the ride down the other side was fun.

Why the crutches?

You may have noticed that one of the Tomos' has crutches attached – Andres explains:

'The crutches were mine. Back in 1979 I had (quite literally) one of the first Yamaha LC250s to come into the country, and it was definitely the first to be written off – I was racing an X7 down Park Lane in London at the time... Unfortunately this wrote my leg off as well so I have an artificial limb. Heat tends not to agree with my prosthetic so the crutches were there to allow me to take it off in the evenings and give it a break. Teenage years, eh!'





Straight out of a Tomos' brochure, circa 1967.



This has got to be another 1960s brochure shot...but it's 2014.



There's something surreal about tiny mopeds parked underneath a massive concrete archway - Salvador Dali would be proud.



Made it to Catalonia!



Spaniards were fascinated by the 'pedes.

Calling it a day at 6pm we found our hotel, had a traditional Spanish pizza (the joys of being veggie in Spain) and crashed out exhausted but happy after a very eventful day - 99 miles, which all things considered, wasn't bad at all.

BUEN VIAJE

Having what the Spanish politely call a 'whore's breakfast' (coffee and a fag) we hit the road early again and were now truly into some beautiful riding. Quiet country roads passed vineyards, fields of sunflowers and the occasional tractor. Wherever we stopped people would come up to us wanting to know about the mopeds, where we were from and where we were going, usually followed by deep intakes of breath then big smiles all round and the cries of 'buen viaje' ringing in our ears as we rode off. Lunch was always easy - we would pick up supplies of bread, cheese and fruit we'd find some shade off the side of the road, pull in and watch the heat shimmering world pass by while we tucked in.

That night threw up one of those 'just right' moments, as having pressed on too far we were getting desperate for a place to stay. Pulling up in the small town of Almudévar we finally found a small bar with rooms just as we were about to give up looking - they even had

What is Tomos?

Based in Koper, Slovenia, Tomos was set up in the former Yugoslavia in 1954, making Puchs under licence. It was a success (Marshal Tito himself opened a new factory in 1959) and Tomos became a big cheese in the European moped market, even exporting to the USA in the wake of the 1970s oil crisis. Against all the odds, it survived the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the break up of Yugoslavia, plus privatisation in 1998. Now owned by a private Slovenian company, and with a small workforce of 100, it still makes its mopeds as well as parts for BMW.

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veggie pizza on the menu, result! A lovely evening was had sitting in the street, chatting to a local couple who explained all about the forthcoming festival while we watched the locals practising carrying the Virgin Mary from the local church down through the streets. Judging by how many times they nearly dropped her they'd had even more wine than us.

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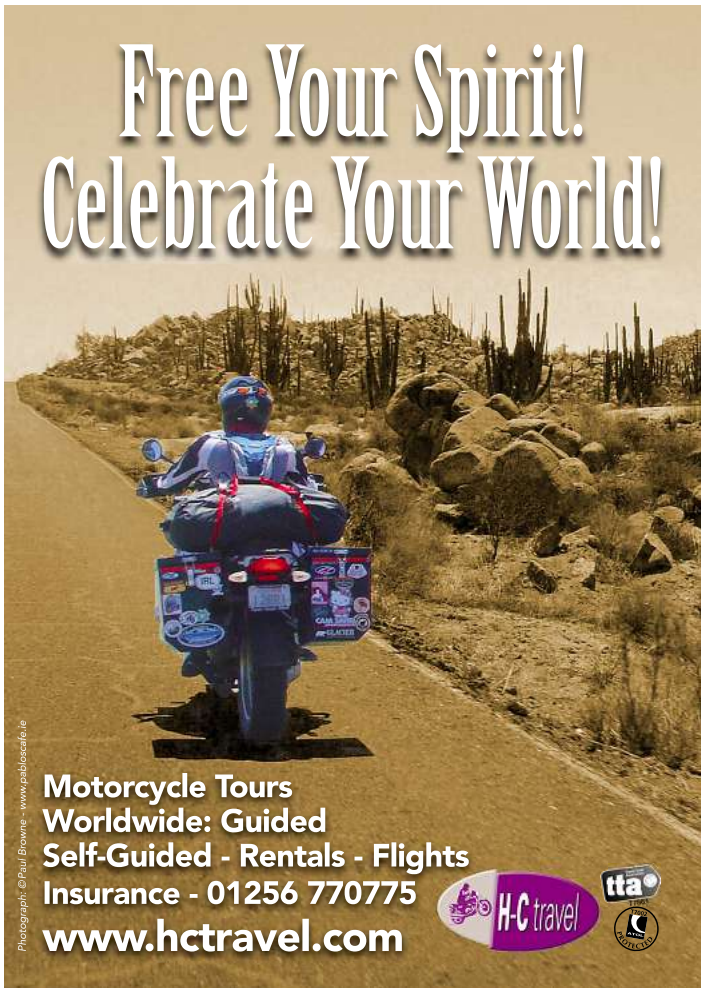
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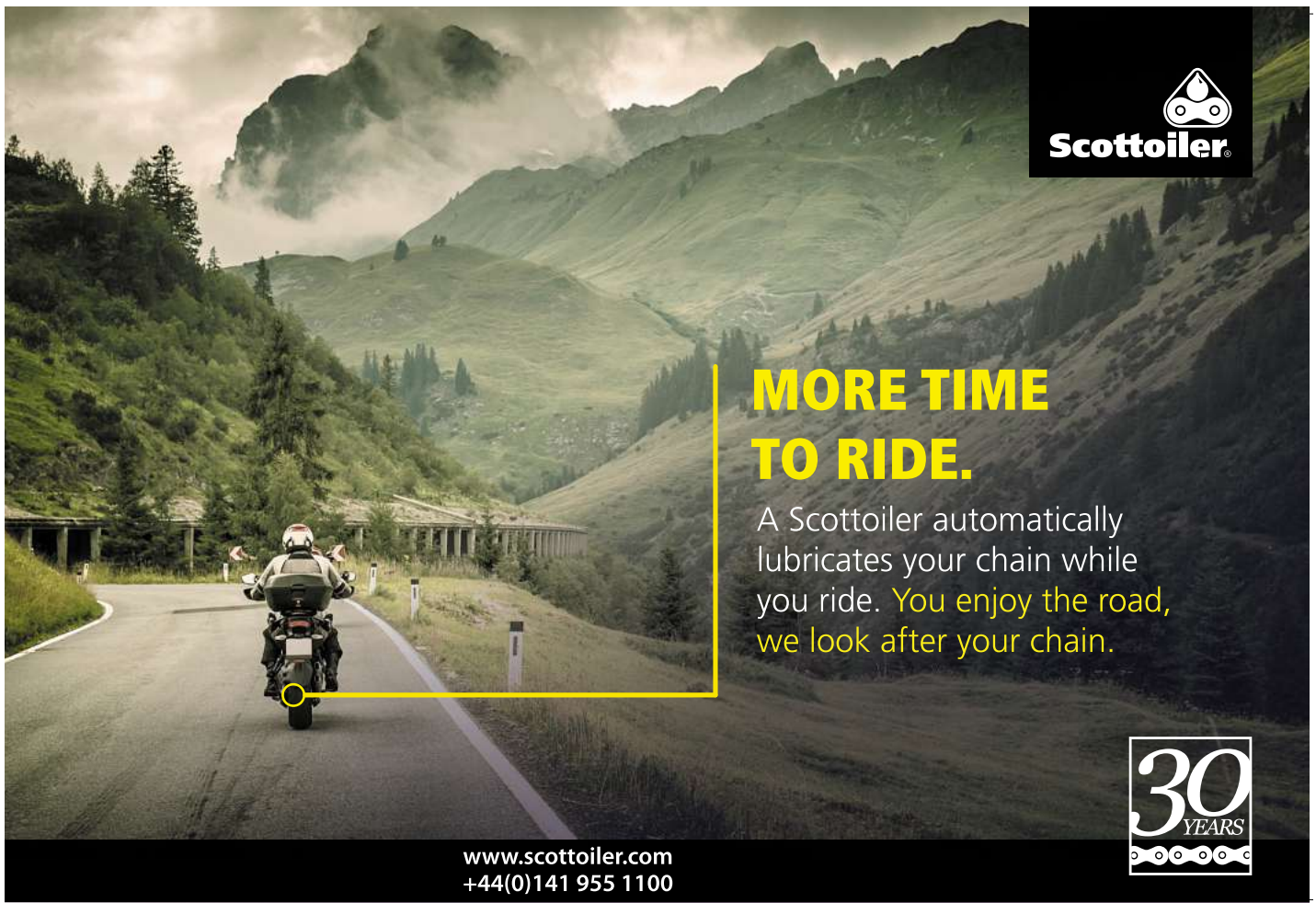
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Outback and Bourke

Never seen the goat racing in Coolabah? You need to get into the outback, mate.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: Roger Fogg

ABOVE: Sign bans 'oversize vehicles and graders' from using the sheep grid.

BELOW: 'Coolabah'. At least, it's over that ridge somewhere, honest.

At this year's Coolabah Goat Races, a whopping total of \$750 (Australian) was paid for a goat named 'Bogan Boy' in the auction, while The Nyngan Bitches beat The Handbrakes in the ladies' tug o' war, and Mrs Dean won a fridge in the raffle.



Coolabah, besides having trees of that name, is a small town you pass through on the road between Sydney and Bourke. And Bourke is the place that, to Australians, means right out in the sticks – it's their equivalent of Upper-Snodsbury-in-the-Wold, but dustier.

When people say they live 'outback of Bourke,' it means they live far from civilisation. What they really mean is far from Western culture because, of course, the Aboriginal people had lived there quite happily for thousands of years.

I'd always wanted to ride a motorcycle in Australia, but the cost of shipping my own bike out there was just too much. I could afford a cheap flight, and could arrange accommodation in Sydney, but it looked like trains and buses to get around until someone suggested I hire a bike.

With the help of H-C Travel, I did just that, booking a BMW F650 for six days. Several firms hire bikes out of Sydney, everything from Harleys to Vespas, and mine came in at just under \$200 (£100) a day. I took my own jacket and helmet, but I could have hired the riding kit as well.

I was told not to take the bike off sealed roads, which ruled out the Oodnadatta, a dirt track that stretches nearly 400 miles through the heart of the outback. There was a mileage limit, and the hire charge included insurance. And very little bureaucracy, because after showing my UK docs, I was straight off into the afternoon traffic.



MAKE LIKE A BEAR

It wasn't so bad. I was on a familiar bike (I have an F650 at home) and Oz traffic is on the correct side of the road as far as the Brits are concerned. I felt I had to cross Sydney Harbour Bridge before I escaped the city, and duly did so before heading inland towards the Blue Mountains.

I was on a busy multi-lane highway that takes commuters out to the suburbs, and beyond into the higher ground of the Great Dividing Range, one of Australia's biggest mountain ranges, sharing its route with the railway.

Stupidly (but not, I was told, untypically for newly landed tourists) I hadn't realised how cold it can be in New South Wales. Thinking to save on baggage, I had only brought jeans and a pair of light overtrousers.

Soon I was really feeling the chill, and passing through what are ski resorts in the snowy season. So, I stopped and bought some thermals, and very fetching they were too, bright blue beneath my cheap jeans and lime-green overtrousers.

Fortunately, I wasn't camping, having planned to try and find cheap accommodation, back packers' hostels

ABOVE: "Welcome to Nyngan" say the signs, "and the Great Outback".

RIGHT: The railway was abandoned more than 40 years ago, but why take it up? The termites'll take care of the sleepers.



and the like. But I'm also not very patient, and finding what looked like a nice hotel I forgot all about the budget aspirations and stopped there instead.

In the morning, and with a Full English inside me, I carried on down the other side of the Great Dividing Range through pleasant farming country and under blue skies towards the city of Dubbo, where I joined the Mitchell Highway for Bourke. Did I mention blue skies? Well, then it started to rain, not a lot, but enough to make my gloves wet and my ankles feel icy.

The road is very straight, paralleling the line of an old railway as it passes through small towns. Although the trains stopped running in the 70s, the track is still there, though there are practically no wooden sleepers left thanks to the termites. Abandoned water towers and sidings at the old stations mark the passing of the miles.

Gates and culverts line the edges of the highway, with every now and then a red dusty track leading off into the

BELOW: It may not look like much, but petrol and iced drinks are beckoning...



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Would you trust your rented BMW to a bridge of sheet steel, corrugated iron and old railway sleepers?

bush, who knows where, and there is little traffic. Stopped by the side of the road, I came across a dingo, which on my approach sauntered off and hid in a drainpipe. Feeling like Bear Grylls, I crouched down and took its picture, which was a bit blurred, though I will show it to Bear when I next see him.

Bourke turned out to be a very pleasant town on the banks of the Darling River. I was scared of the Darling, which is not a bit like East Cornwall's Fal, or the leafy upper reaches of the Thames. No, the Darling is muddy, deep, high-banked and dangerous looking. Bourke was once an inland port and exported sheep all over the world via this waterway, and reportedly has a jetty and good fishing. But it was too early in the day to stop, and I felt like carrying on, though by starting back eastwards.

It was late that Sunday afternoon when I reached Brewarrina, still very much in what I felt was the outback, short of petrol and unable to find an open garage or hotel. But there was a sign nailed to a post, 'Bokhara Hutz, accommodation'. It was another 35k out of town, and my fuel situation was worrying, but I didn't seem to have any choice, so off I went, over the Darling and out into the flat dusty plain beyond.



Roger is wearing a fetching combination with lime-green highlights – they still talk about it in Bourke.



We know he wasn't supposed to stray off Tarmac, but sometimes it's unavoidable

Eventually, after an increasingly anxious ride, I found the dirt track leading to the farm. Now officially I had to stay on Tarmac, but this was someone's drive, so that didn't count. The bungalow was open, and it was clearly civilised – I could see a computer blinking, a visa sign on the window and a TV on.

Slightly relieved (now very low on fuel with dusk coming on) I moved into an old shearers' hut which had been completely updated. The food was excellent and I even had a tour round the farm thrown in. Better still, they were able to sell me some petrol, pumped from a barrel into my tank – a godsend, and at normal pump prices.

The farm turned out to be eco-friendly, as the owner is trying to put right the years of damage, substituting his own ways of animal husbandry for the intensive European methods of farming that have degraded the land.

But this was still the outback, and to illustrate the point, one of the farm workers told me how he typically rode his old Honda XL over to his mother's place several times a week, 50 miles across country.

No spares, a bottle of water and a phone that might or might not work. "I never stray off the path," he said, "and



ABOVE: Outback sunset.

if there's a problem someone will come looking if I don't turn up." Another example was a nearby river bridge that consisted of loosely welded flat-iron plate welded to girders across the river. It didn't look like it should inspire confidence, but if it could stand the weight of utes and tractors, then I reckoned an F650 was safe.

ROOM IN A PUB

I wish I could have spent more time there, but only had a few days left to get back to Sydney. So, one cold morning (yes, it gets cold at nights in the outback) I rode east through Walgett, Gilgandra and Muswellbrook, staying that night in an old-fashioned pub hotel. Cheap, with single rooms above the pub on a balcony, and shared toilets and showers – authentic outback accommodation.

I've got a shed full of old vehicles at home, and spotted several old British cars and lorries, including a wonderful ex-army Bedford and the remains of a wood-fuelled steam engine on one farm.

At an antiques place I bagged a leather saddle for my 1920s AJS, which has proved more useful than the hat I

RIGHT: Basically, if you like twisty Tarmac, don't come here.



BELOW: Looks like Plymouth to us, but Roger assures us this really is New South Wales.



bought for scaring away magpies. That had eyes printed on it as apparently the birds will not attack anything that is looking straight back at them. Just give them a hard stare, eh Paddington?

I was rather particular about roadkill, carefully avoiding the dead wombats, kangaroos and other partially consumed fly-blown corpses that occur all too frequently. Another road hazard was, of course, the road trains, which need full attention as they sweep past in a gale of dust, twigs, stones and fumes.

Around Muswellbrook the road skirts Hunter Valley, home of racehorses and fine wines. Grand gated entrances announce that this is the home of such and such vineyard, stud farm or race track. It was here that I had a very close encounter with a ute, and it was my fault. I had pulled out from a layby, but hadn't cancelled the indicator on the BMW. Thinking I was turning off, the ute pulled out in front of me and I missed him by inches. Still, I missed him.

After a night in Newcastle I joined the main coastal highway back to Sydney where I was able to return the F650 on time and in one piece. Bourke is around 500 miles from Sydney, and this being Oz, some people drive it in a day, or get a flight. But I felt that I'd had a taste of outback motorcycling, enough to give me bragging rights, but really it only whetted my appetite for more.

Never mind Route 66 – that's easy – maybe a lap of down under next time? Now that little adventure could be combined with other methods of transport, and I've tried trains, buses, boats, cable cars and a pushbike. I've been seasick on the Great Barrier Reef, bitten on Bondai and got a cold in Cairns. On second thoughts, give me the bike any day.



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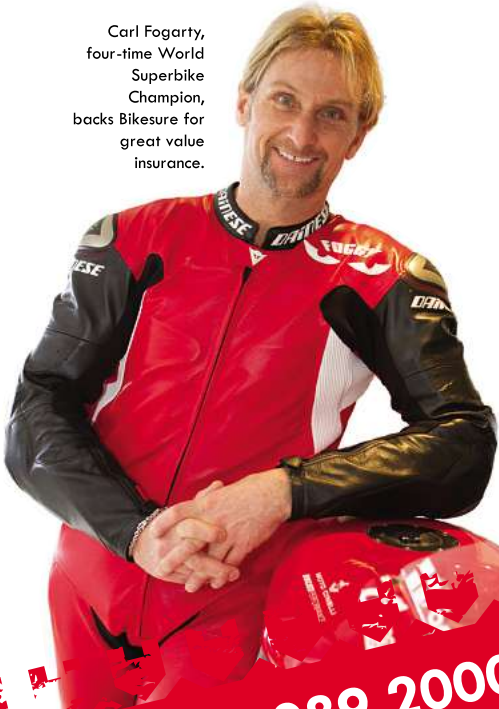
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Learn from THE DUCATI GREATS!

Revamped Ducati event is now taking bookings. And this year it gets a new Multistrada-specific adventure school too.



The 2015 Ducati Riding Experience (the DRE), the riding school that Ducati has been holding for the past decade, is now taking enrolments. There are four separate parts to the DRE which will cater to different types and skill levels of rider.

The courses are held at legendary racetracks like Mugello and Misano, the instructors are top-flight racers like official Ducati MotoGP test rider Michele Pirro, world Superbike champion Carlos Checa, two-times world champion Manuel Poggiali, official Ducati test rider Alessandro Valia and a host of other champions led by Dario Marchetti. The courses are all-inclusive packages with new Ducatis and complete riding gear included.

One of the most important developments for 2015 is the introduction of the Multistrada Techride course dedicated to the new Multistrada 1200. This is what Ducati calls a “full immersion riding course” for touring and adventure

enthusiasts. Held in the beautiful hills of Tuscany region, with base in Montepulciano (near Siena), the course programme lasts a day and a half and focuses on road-specific techniques as well as teaching the basics of off-road riding.

At the circuit, the first change for 2015 is the Intro course, suitable for those who are not regular riders and it is also new-rider friendly. The course takes place in the paddock and alternates individual practice sessions with theoretical lessons designed to help learn things like riding position, corner visualization, braking with ABS, and how to react in front of unexpected obstacles (the course does not include track sessions). Intro course participants will be riding the new Monster 821.

The Precision course is for those looking to improve their on-road riding technique and uses the Monster 1200, the Hypermotard and the Hyperstrada.

There are four track riding courses: Track Warm-Up, Track Evo, Master and Champs

Academy. The first is for newcomers to the track, the second for those keen to improve their track riding technique; on both courses riders will be using the Ducati 899 Panigale. The Master course is for more experienced track users and The Champs Academy offers a full day as a professional rider with World Superbike Champion 2011 Carlos Checa. Master and Champs Academy course participants will ride the new 1299 Panigale S.

To enrol or find out more about the courses and the calendar go to: dre.ducati.com

2015 CALENDAR

DATE	PLACE
May 8-10	Montepulciano (Multistrada Techride)
May 11-13	Misano Adriatico
June 15-17	Mugello
July 3-5	Montepulciano (Multistrada Techride)
July 14-16	Adria
September 8-10	Mugello



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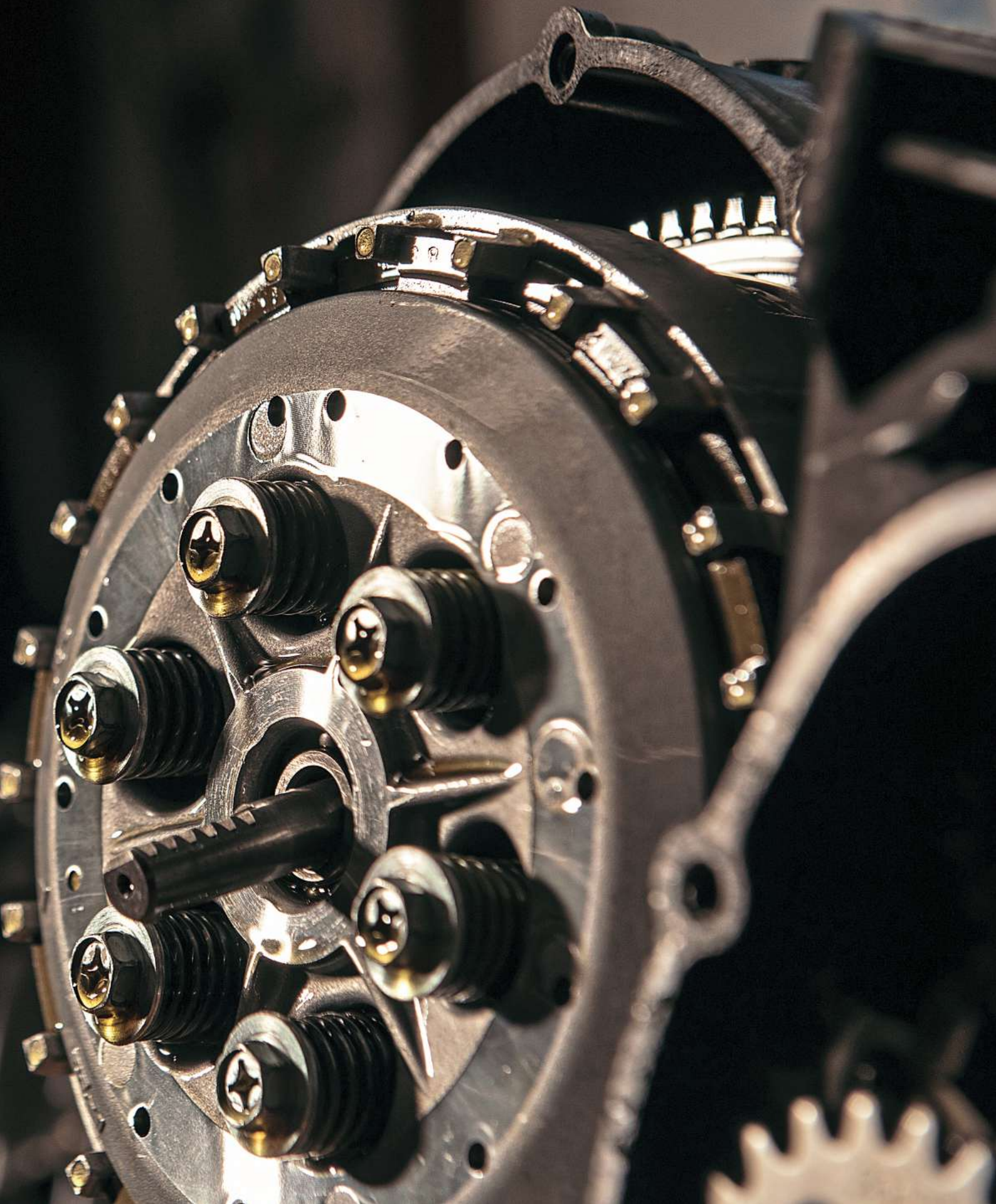
HOW TO READ YOUR ENGINE AND MAKE IT LAST LONGER

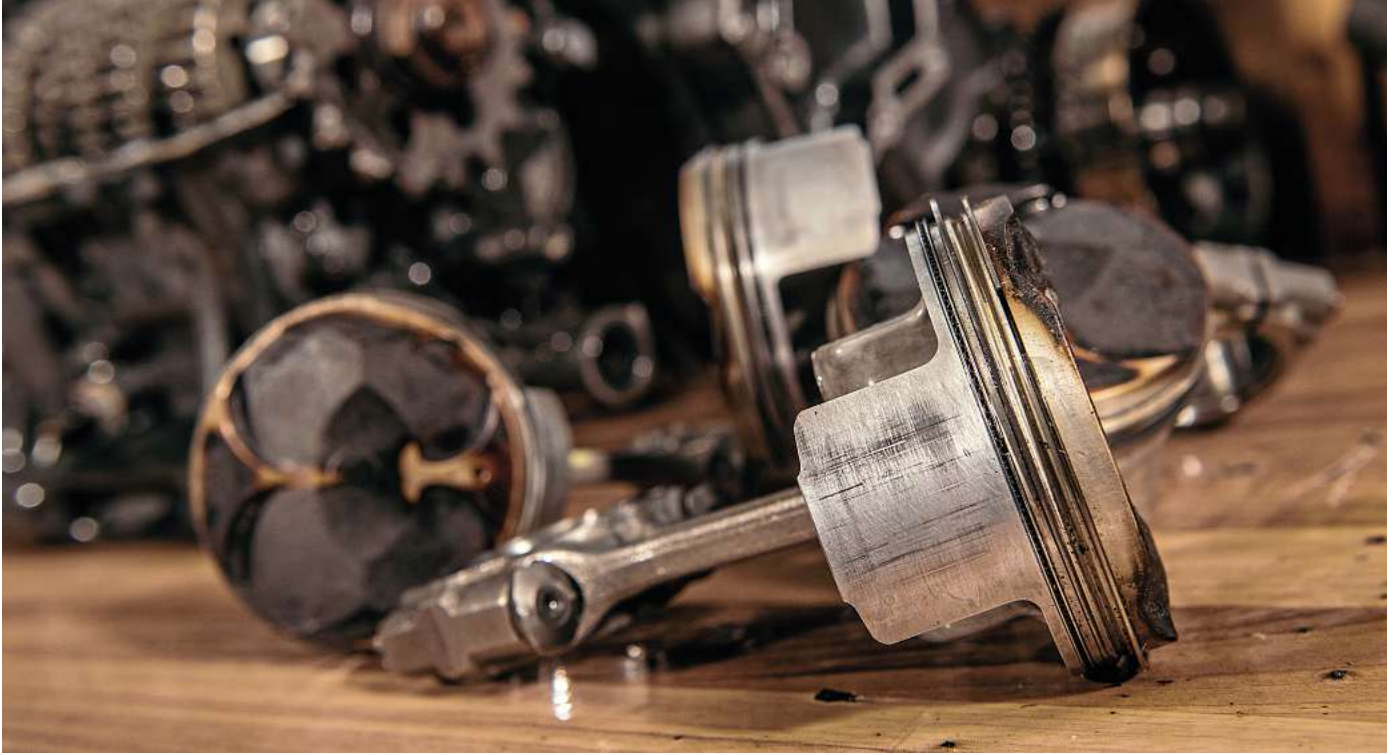
It surprises us all when an engine goes wrong, but if you look closely enough the signs of fatigue will be pretty obvious.

WORDS: Bruce Wilson PHOTOGRAPHY: Joe Dick

In reality, it's not every day that you decide to strip down your motor. Most of us don't have the ability, know-how or even inclination to do so. But one man who's made it his life's work to interpret the intricacies of engines is Mark Sadler. An ex-aerospace engineer, he worked on everything from Indy cars to F1 before switching his focus to bikes.

Ten years ago he launched his own motorsport engineering company, Go Racing Developments, and has since made a name for himself in the British Superbike paddock. But he's not just an expert at tuning motors; he is a dab hand at inspecting them too. We headed over to his Oxfordshire base to sit in on a fascinating strip-down of a seven-year-old Yamaha engine, while picking up some great advice on how to make motors last longer.





Pistons

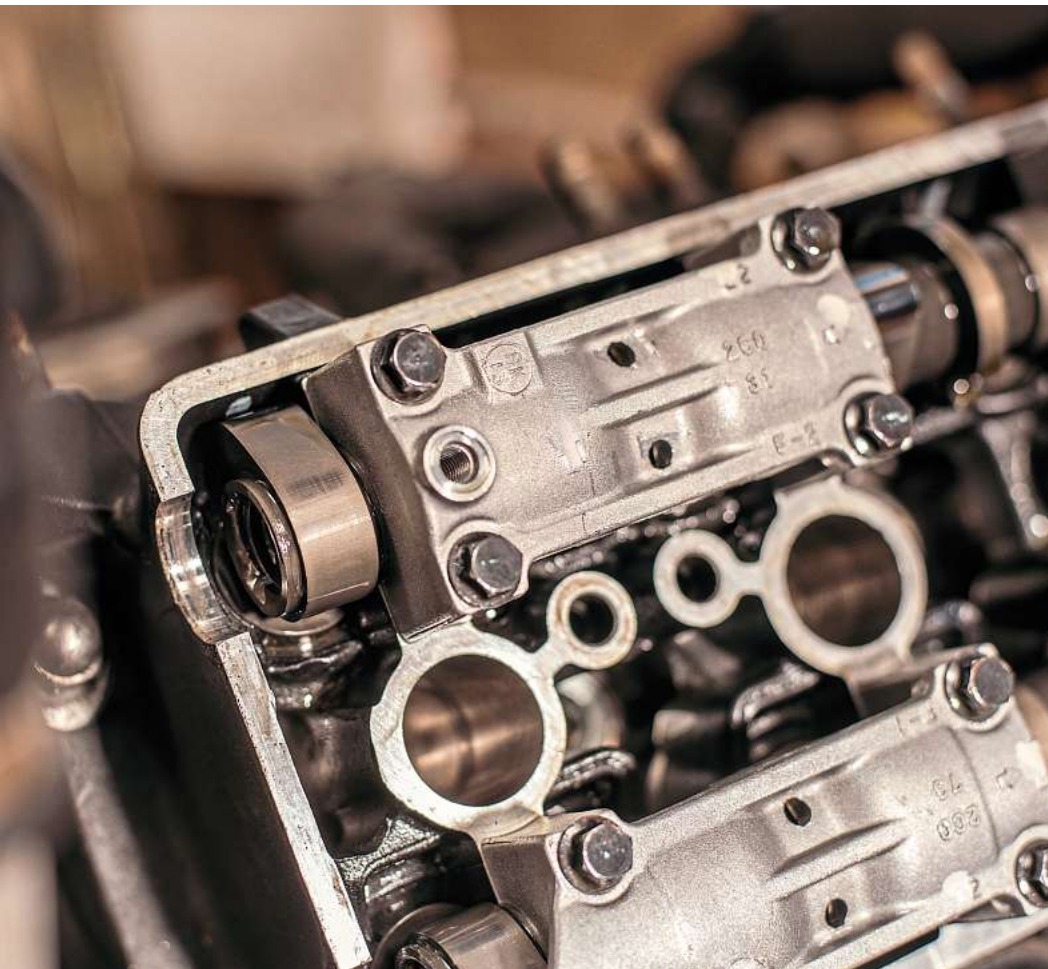
WHAT TO CHECK FOR:

Pistons are the workhorse of an engine. Taking a bike's cylinder head off will give you a chance to examine the top of a motor's pistons. You'll be able to see whether the valves have been contacting the crowns of the pistons, and examine the state of carbon build-up. But to get a fuller appreciation of a piston's welfare you'll need to remove the cylinder(s). Once a piston is fully exposed, you can see if any of the rings are worn – identified by a difference in colour and flatter edges – or whether carbon has been blowing by the rings, causing a loss of compression and performance. Scrape marks on the skirt of the piston are also a good

indicator of a potential problem, often meaning there is excessive play on the big end bearings. Any signs of the above will necessitate further investigation, as problems will only ever get worse.

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGE:

Piston life can be extended by using good-quality oil, not over revving an engine and by simply warming your bike up properly before you use it. Ensuring your airbox and filter are clean will also help to prevent any debris from reaching the cylinders and compromising the pistons in any way.



Camshafts

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A camshaft is responsible for opening and closing a motor's valves. They sit at the top of an engine and can be accessed by removing the cam cover. Most cams are made from steel and have hardened lobes. There are obvious signs which can help you identify any wear on cams, such as changes to the colour of the lobes or alterations to their profiles – both suggesting wear. A bad cam will compromise the valves it operates, so it's essential this key item is in top condition at all times. Another obvious sign of a problem with the cams is spotting any imperfections on the shim buckets and the camshaft's lobes.

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGE:

Oil starvation is the number one killer of cams. They should last for a very, very long time. But running the oil low in your bike will often compromise the cams first, because they're the farthest from the engine's core supply of oil. Keep your levels up and you'll give your cams a fighting chance.

Valves

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Valves are responsible for allowing fuel to reach the pistons in the cylinder, and also exiting the burnt gasses. They are essential to an engine and have the potential to last as long as any other major component, but they can, and do, sometimes fail. The valves are housed in the cylinder head, so you'll need to start by removing this key component from the motor. Checking valve clearances will give you a quick gauge of whether there might be problems with your valves or valve seats, but ideally you need to disassemble the valve systems so you can properly inspect the individual valves. As valves are softer than the cylinder head's seat, they are more prone to wearing, especially if dirt has worked its way up behind the

valve seat, causing excessive heat to reach the non-tempered part of the valve.

Similarly, slack tolerances can allow heat to damage the back sides of the valves. Just like valve springs, the stem of a valve can stretch, so both will need to be checked for length. Valve guides will need to be measured to ensure they are still perfectly true and not compromising the concentricity of valves.

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGE:

Valve tolerances need to be kept on top of as per a manufacturer's guidelines. Valves can also be damaged easily by excessive revs. Revving a motor on to its rev limiter can cause valves to bounce, encouraging components to stretch and the face of the valves to make contact with the pistons.



Cylinders

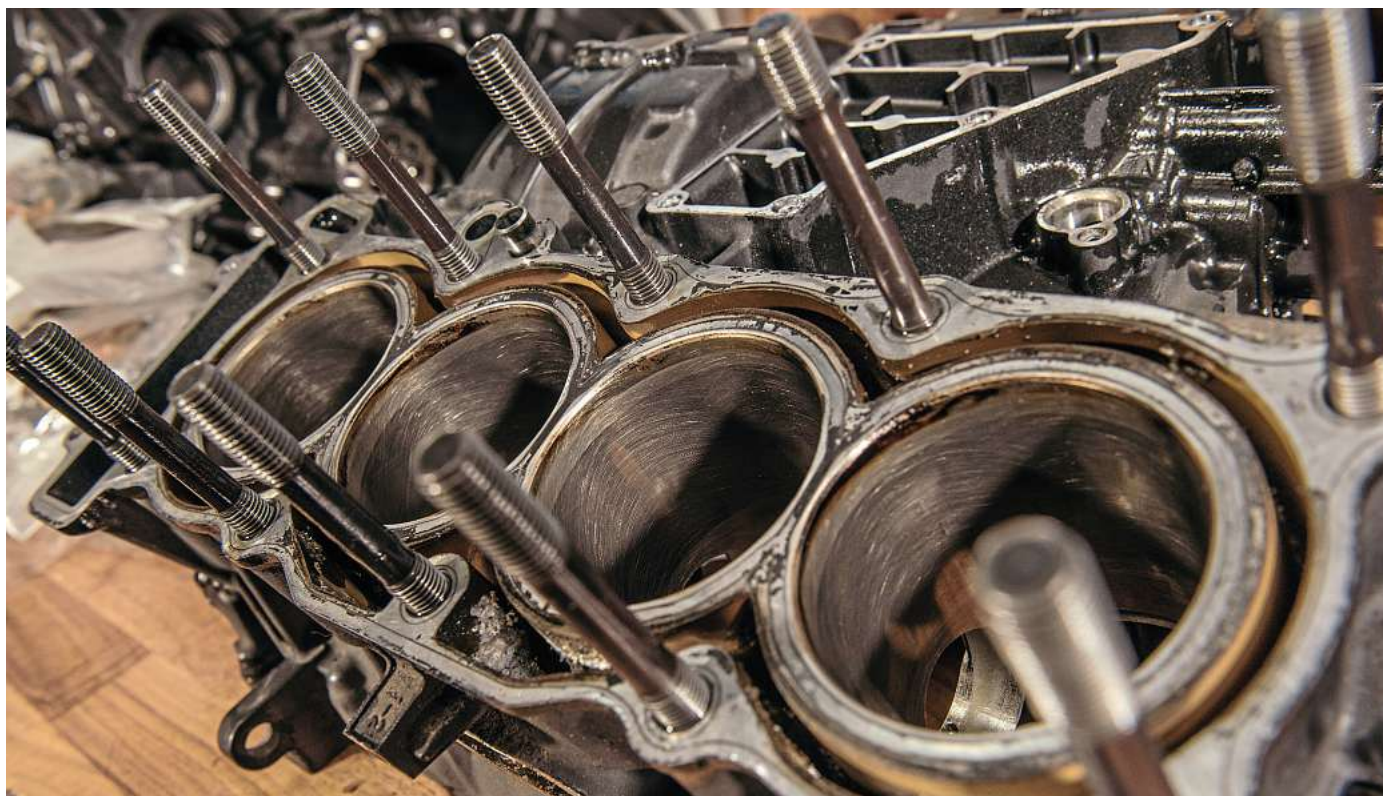
WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

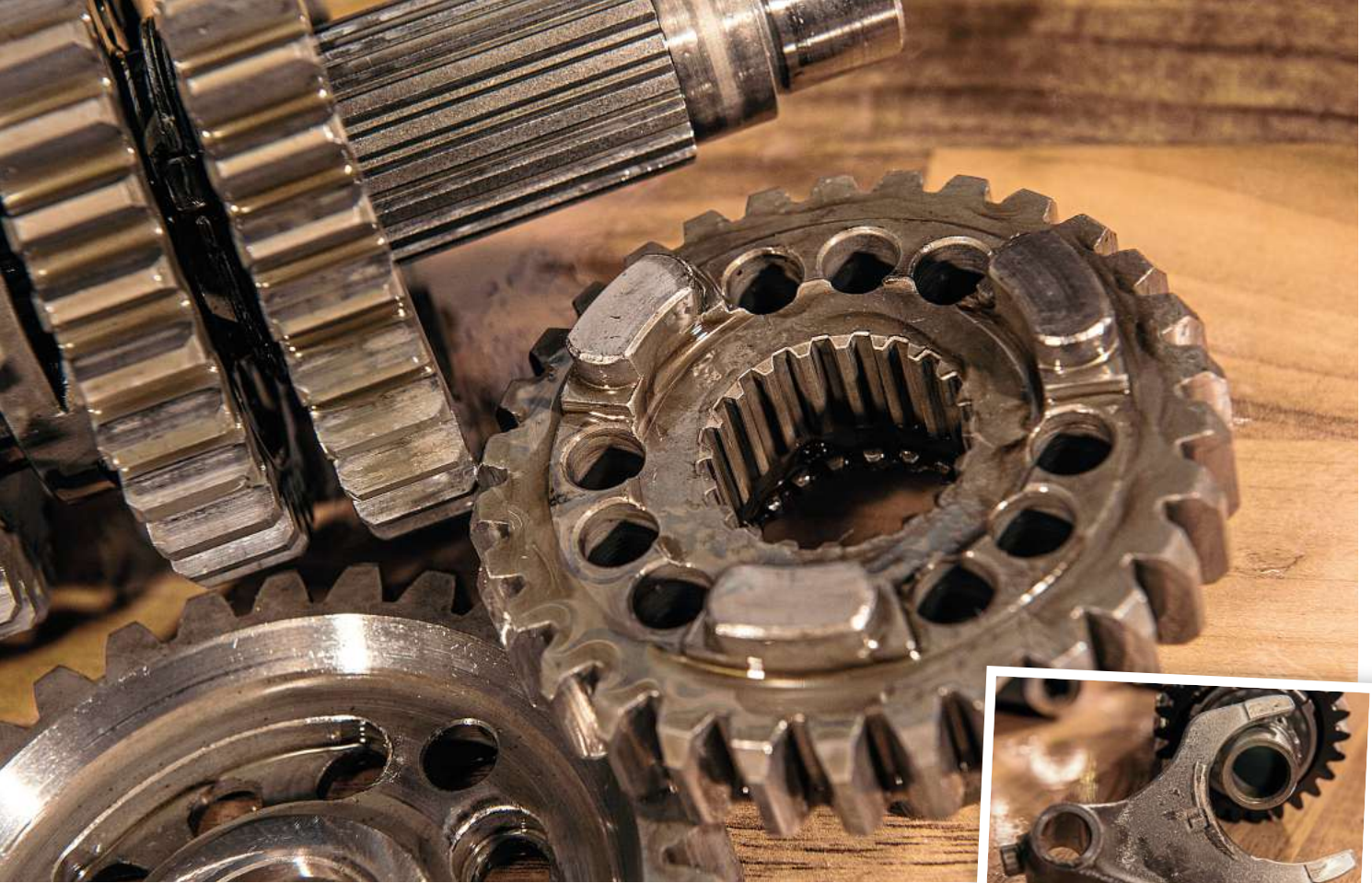
Anything other than a honed bore is unacceptable. Too smooth and you'll be losing pressure. The same goes for scored barrels, which is also a sign of a much more serious problem in need of proper investigation. It's typical that the front and rear faces of cylinders wear most, owing to the thrust forced upon them by the pistons. In extreme cases, this can cause cylinders to become oval in profile, permitting low pressure and gas blow-by. Mild scores can be removed using a silicone carbide ball hone. Deep scores might necessitate

replacement liners, a rebore or Nikasil plating according to the type of cylinders on your engine.

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGE:

Cylinders wear naturally, but good-quality oil will encourage a longer life as there's less friction between components. Rings are wearing components, so they should be kept on top of to prevent damage to the barrels. As with many other components, warming an engine up properly before use is the best defence against damage.





Gearbox

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A gearbox consists of gears, selector forks and selector drums. It's unlikely that the drum will show signs of wear, but the gears are a different story. On the sides of the gears are lobes, called dogs, which mesh with the next gear when a new selection is made. These 'dogs' are the first point of contact and are

prone to wearing. Once they've worn sufficiently, the gears will fail to mesh properly, the energy within kicking the gears apart and putting side load on the selector forks. Bent forks make it almost impossible to hook gears, enforcing a full engine strip on most engines to replace damaged components.

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGE:

Most gearbox wear is down to harsh gear changes or poorly set up quick shifters. Taking just a fraction longer to make a gear change, while using the clutch at all times, can make life so much easier on your gearbox components, extending their lives.

Crankshafts

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

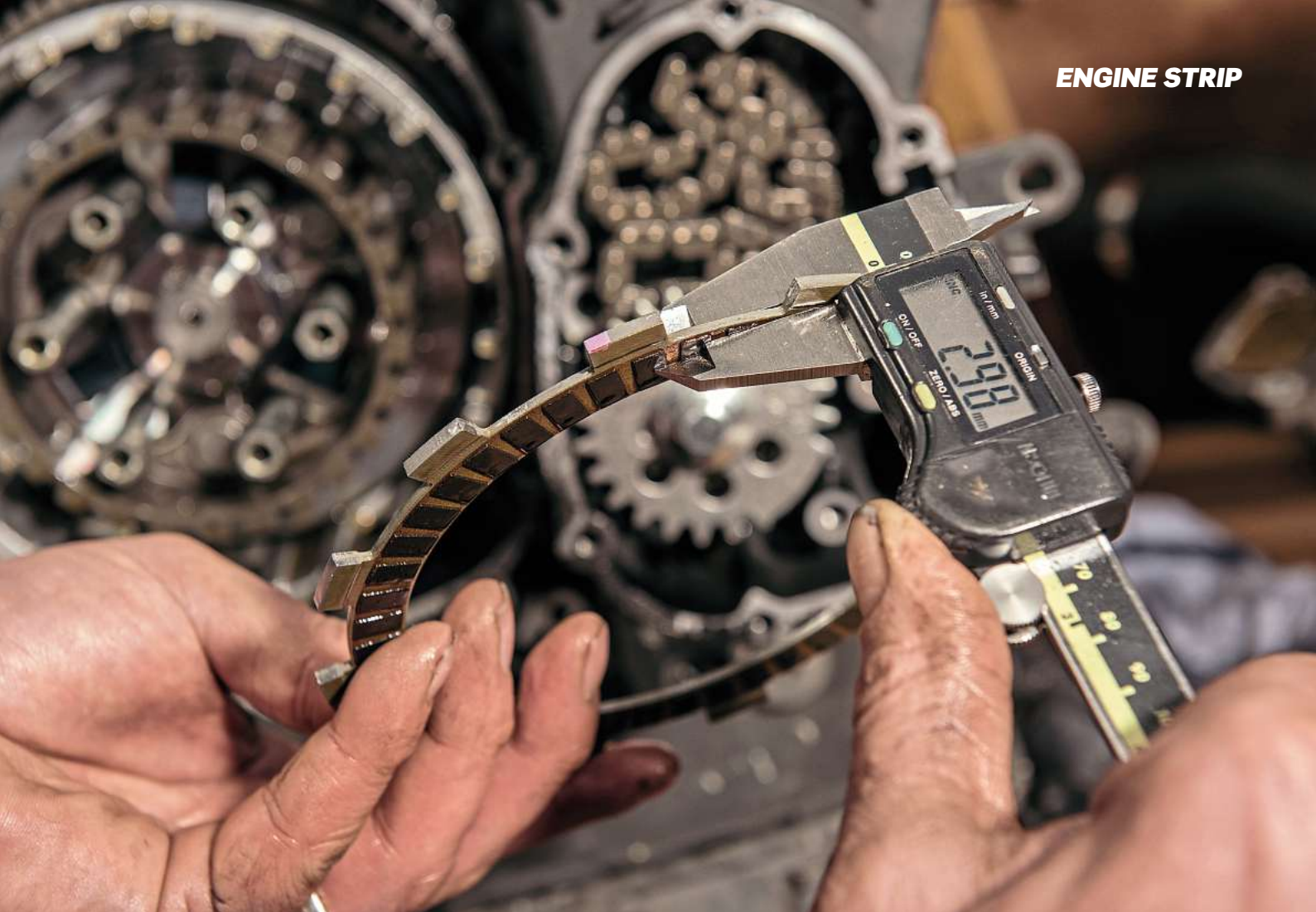
The engine revolves around the crankshaft. It's responsible for so much of a motor's operation. They are typically very tough items and it does take a lot to compromise a shaft, but it does happen. They are known to twist in rotation and can even bend, after a tremendous force, such as an engine lock-up, or extreme back torque caused by excessive downshifting of gears.

A crankshaft's journals are also prone to wearing or pitting if debris is allowed to contact them. The crank should always have a thin layer of oil preventing it contacting the soft shell bearings it runs within. Even a small level of oil starvation can mean that the crank touches the shells, necessitating a full engine strip to repair the damaged bearings. An easy way to identify damaged shells is a difference in colour on their white metal surface, or blatant scrape marks.

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGE:

Change your engine oil as regularly as guided by your motorcycle's manufacturer, to reduce the possibility of materials blocking up the crucial oil feeds to the crank. Also make a point of never changing down more than one gear at a time.





Clutch

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

A clutch allows your engine to disengage drive, permitting smooth gear changes. When engaged, the clutch assembly is under a lot of pressure and it's common that a number of the components within are susceptible to wear, provoking the clutch to slip or gear changes to be compromised. Inside a clutch are steel and friction plates.

A friction plate has special material on it, which contacts with the steel plates on application of the clutch. Consequently, the material on the friction plates wears over time. Once it becomes too thin they allow contact between the inner basket and the pressure plate, causing the

clutch to slip. Through use, the clutch basket also wears nodules into its retaining walls, which can encourage a notchy clutch action. These notches can be filed out, but it only exaggerates the range of movement.

HOW TO PREVENT DAMAGE:

Smooth application of the clutch with low revs will accentuate the life of a clutch. It's also very important to make sure that you use the correct oil for your engine. Not every engine oil is designed to service both the clutch and the engine. Make sure you buy and use the right specification for your bike.

Three engine facts you might not know...

Testing Mark's knowledge even further, we asked him to tell us three things that most people wouldn't know about motorcycle engines...

- 1 – Honda's CBR250RR revs to 20,000rpm; higher than a Formula 1 engine.
- 2 – Motorcycle engines are unique in using one lot of oil to lubricate engine gearbox and clutch, meaning you must not use a car oil in a motorcycle.
- 3 – A Bugatti Veyron engine only makes 125hp per litre compared with 185hp per litre for a standard Kawasaki ZX10R

Special thanks...



A special thanks to Mark Sadler of Go Racing Developments. If you're wanting to know more about engine development or need an engine refreshing, contact Mark on 07739 430671 or email mark@gord.biz

VERY MULTI-TALENTED

If you err on the sportier side of adventure bikes, Ducati's Multistrada 1200 is a bike that needs to be sampled.

WORDS: Chris Moss PHOTOGRAPHY: Mike Weston

Ducati welcomed a new type of customer when it launched its first Multistrada. Appealing to riders wanting an all-rounder with practicality and comfort, the adventure-bike styled 1000DS version went on sale in 2003. Its capable chassis allowed faster riding, though the modest power of its 85bhp air-cooled, 2v, V-twin engine limited the sporting ambitions. However, the bike's looks provided its biggest challenge, and the Multistrada's bland aesthetics made sure it didn't win over many buyers.

The bike was improved in detail in 2005, the same year the S version was introduced with its higher-spec Öhlins' suspension and carbon parts. Then, in 2007, the bigger-capacity 1078cc versions of the two machines became available, giving an extra 10bhp. But the questionable

looks remained until 2010 when the all-new 1200 Multistrada hit the showrooms.

Powered by a 150bhp liquid-cooled Testastretta engine, the far more stylish 1200 boasted strong performance, helping it appeal to ageing sportsbike riders with an eye for speed but an increasing preference for comfort. Three versions were available – the 1200S Sport (the model







The piggyback pipes are reminiscent of the RGV250!



There's a LOT of information in not much space here.

we've tested here) had electronically controlled suspension and a choice of four dynamic modes. The similarly equipped S Touring came complete with panniers, heated grips, and a centrestand. The basic lower-spec model had less electronic trickery – though ABS was an option, becoming standard fitment in 2012. All three bikes featured keyless ignition. Upgrades came in 2013, with new torque-boosting engine mods, and semi-active skyhook suspension. The limited-edition S GT, and Pikes Peak models appeared in 2011 and 2013.

This year, they'll be superseded by the all-new and very technically advanced 2015 versions of the 1200 Multistrada. The standard and S models boast desmodromic variable valve timing, an additional 10bhp, an Inertial Measurement Unit controlling engine power, braking and traction control, and a lighting system to help illuminate corners at night. A multimedia system links the bike to your smart phone. The latest skyhook active electronic suspension is exclusive to the S model.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO RIDE

Being a Ducati, the 1200 Multistrada doesn't take long to love. It has plenty of style, thrilling performance, boasts lots of character and makes a lovely noise. More telling perhaps are details such as the clutch being light, the mirrors giving a good view, and the steering lock providing a useful turning circle. There still might be room for detailed improvement in some areas, but it's clear the all-rounder has been designed carefully and thoughtfully. It's a very sorted motorcycle – a very big thing to say about a Ducati not that long ago.

Built and finished well, the Multistrada is a hugely capable bike, and one you want to just ride and ride. It's arguably even more versatile than a BMW R1200GS, and likely to keep you away from home for long periods. The 1200S Sport we tested features electronic engine and chassis management, with a massive number of settings

The Multistrada is a hugely capable bike. It's arguably even more versatile than a BMW R1200GS

I OWN ONE

Shaun Merrick has had his Multistrada 1200S for four and a half years, clocking up over 20,000 miles in that time.

"I bought one of the first models back in 2010 and had to travel down to Plymouth to get it as they were in such high demand. Sportsbikes such as my 996 Duke were becoming more of a pain to ride, so I fancied something more useful.

"The Multistrada is like a jet-propelled armchair and dead comfy. I once did 1000 miles on it in a day quite easily. It's bloody quick and handles well, though fitting some stiffer springs at each end made it even better. The electronically adjustable suspension allows you to alter the settings to your heart's content.

"I had the brake ABS ECU reprogrammed as the system was too intrusive, but having the fuel warning light re-set at the same time wasn't as welcome, as it now comes on when there's still around seven litres of fuel left. Removing the cat box gave the bike a lot more power and torque but it was way too noisy so I had it re-fitted once its internals had been gutted. I've since seen 160mph on the clock in Germany.

"The only problem I've had with the bike is a dodgy rear suspension ECU which gave up at around 8000 miles. But it was replaced under warranty and everything's been fine since. The finish is strong so it's pretty easy to keep it looking good. I think it's a great all-round, versatile bike, and whether I'm using it for thrashing, getting to work, or going to Europe, it always does a good job. The only thing I don't like about it is the width of the bars, they're way too wide and set your arms out excessively. And it's not suited to off-road riding because the wheel sizes are wrong and the bodywork's too expensive to break," says the 56-year-old Manchester courier company boss.




Specification
**DUCATI'S
MULTISTRADA
1200**

ENGINE: 998cc, liquid-cooled, 8v, dohc, desmodromic 90° V-twin

MAXIMUM POWER: 150bhp @ 9250rpm

MAXIMUM TORQUE: 88lb-ft @ 7500rpm

GEARBOX: six-speed

FINAL DRIVE: chain

FRAME: tubular steel trellis

SUSPENSION: (F) 48mm Öhlins' inverted telescopic forks, electronically adjustable rebound and compression damping. (R) Öhlins' rising-rate monoshock, electronically fully adjustable

BRAKES: (F) 320mm discs with four-piston radial ABS calipers. (R) 245mm disc with twin-piston ABS caliper

TYRES: (F) 120/70 x 17 (R) 190/55 x 17

SEAT HEIGHT: 850mm

WHEELBASE: 1530mm

DRY WEIGHT: 192kg

FUEL CAPACITY: 20 litres

to choose from. In short there are four riding modes; Sport, Touring, Urban and Enduro. Each has a pre-set power (altering the maximum and way it's delivered), suspension, and traction control setting, though there's also a chance to alter the suspension more specifically via tuneable electronic preload, compression and damping adjusters. There are also some pre-set options you can select to cope with the extra weight of pillion, or luggage, or both. Needless to say, it'll take you a while to learn and experience the effects of them all.

What takes much less time to understand is the bike's convenient, yet stimulating, nature. Okay, it's a bit tall so shorties like me might find getting on board less than straightforward to begin with. But you're soon used to that, and once the suspension is compressed by your bodyweight you'll be able to get both feet firmly on the

floor – though there is a 25mm lower seat available from the range of official accessories.

Once you've released the keyless steering lock, activated the ignition and got underway, the relative position of your feet, hands and bum instantly highlights the Duke's comfort potential. Opening its throttle highlights its sporting capability just as quickly. Even in the Touring mode, which gives full power with a slightly slower throttle response, you'll not really want much more power or torque. And thanks to healthy doses of both existing in the midrange, higher revs aren't often needed. Mind you, if you do spin up the motor more seriously it's very easy to accelerate to silly speeds. It's a very strong engine. Selecting the Urban setting will drop peak power from 150 to 100bhp. But as the engine is well-mannered and usable enough already, I'd wager you

VALUES

**£8000-
£14,000**

* Prices are for early models sold privately in average condition to almost new, well cared-for examples available at dealers.

OTHER BIKES TO CONSIDER

KTM 990 SMT

2009-2013, 999cc, 75° V-twin, 115bhp, 196kg

Sporty, practical, and huge fun, the SMT is an all-rounder with attitude. Strong performance and good comfort means the laughter lasts.


BMW R1200GS

2010-2012, 1170cc, flat twin, 110bhp, 199kg

The most famous BMW of all? Can do absolutely anything, and do it really well. Hugely popular for a very good reason.


**TRIUMPH TIGER
1050 SPORT**

2013-present, 1050cc, inline triple, 123bhp, 235kg

Smooth, flexible and usable engine combined with stable, if slightly heavy, chassis gives an excellent real world package.


**APRILIA CAPONORD
1200 TRAVEL PACK**

2013-present, 1197cc, 90° V-twin, 123bhp, 214kg

Easy to overlook, the Aprilia boasts lots of technically advanced equipment. It's cheap too.



WEBSITE

Experience and tips from other owners can be accessed on www.mts1200.info

Even in the Touring mode, which gives full power with a slightly slower throttle response, you'll not really want much more power or torque

I SELL THEM

Ian Rhodes of Rhodes and Track (www.rhodesandtrack.com, 01604 210900) knows his Multistradas.

"Multistrada 1200s, like all modern Ducatis, are really solid and very reliable. They're built well and show the factory is taking a real interest in its customers. More riders are happily coming to the brand thanks to bikes such as this one.

"Look after Multistradas and change the oil regularly and they'll run and last well. We look after a bike with 33,000 miles on the clock and it looks like it's only done around 6000. The owner is typical in that he cleans it often, has it cared for and serviced when needed. Most Multistrada owners don't mind spending money on their bikes at dealers. Working on them at home isn't as easy as it might be, as access is difficult unless a lot of the bodywork is removed. Cam belt maintenance and replacement is still very important on these bikes.

"There are a lot more red ones than white, and the S models are much more common than the standard bikes. Most owners use Multistradas for what they're designed for – a bit of everything. Commuting on them is common as is going off for short blasts at the weekend, or shooting off to Europe for a break for a couple of weeks. The majority don't modify their bikes much, with slip-on cans and carbon parts being the most common alterations. I've not seen any bikes with any engine tuning.

"Like all bikes there are some minor problems. We've attended to stuff like misting, instruments, seized exhaust valves, and broken gearbox return springs, but Ducatis are nothing like they used to be as far as breakdowns are concerned. Ducati is very good with updates and warranty claims these days too."

won't bother with the reducer.

Whatever mode you choose and however much pace you want to sample, you can rest assured the Ducati's chassis will cope impressively. From walking pace to flat out there's a constant light, manageable and predictable feel. With suspension adjustment only being the touch of a button away, all roads and rider preferences can be catered for. Braking matches the rest of the bike by providing all you'll need in terms of power and feel.

Just as impressive as the superb performance of the engine and chassis, is the Multistrada's versatility. Being as well equipped at it is, the Duke behaves impressively whatever you task it with. Good comfort and manageability make all rides feel easy. Combined with the excellent wind protection offered by the fairing and hand-adjustable screen, as well as the very useful 150-220 mile tank range, covering long distances isn't stressful. Comprehensive instrumentation, including remaining fuel range, makes life all the easier. So too do bungee hooks, handguards, and roomy underseat storage.

The 1200 Multistrada is thrilling, stylish, versatile, real world, and all in all a bit special. It's not the cheapest used bike to consider, but believe me, you get a hell of a lot for your money.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

A 1200 Multistrada is a good used buy in that it has a good record for reliability, and attracts owners who are generally older and tend to look after their bikes. More often than not they're affluent and tend not to cut corners on maintenance. The vast majority have their machines dealer serviced. Most use them for general duties such as commuting and longer-distance touring, typically round

SUSPENSION

The S model's electronic suspension is as convenient as it is effective. 2013-on models with the very impressive skyhook system are the ones to go for. An aftermarket upgraded Öhlins-control module is available for the early bikes for around £350.

BATTERY

Keep the battery charged. Slight drops in voltage will quickly result in starting problems. Chargers should be connected directly to the battery to protect the CAN bus electrical system. Disconnecting the battery will lose any personalised suspension settings.

FUEL TANK EXPANSION

The ethanol content in petrol can cause the plastic fuel tank to expand. Use major brand super unleaded whenever you can and try not to store the bike with a full tank for extended periods.

ELECTRICS

Clocks are prone to moisture ingress leading to warning lights glowing when they shouldn't, or misting up enough to be hard to read. Replacements are more than £600. Take care when jet washing. The keyless system can cause steering lock problems.



AFTERMARKET EXHAUSTS

Slip-on cans don't require any work to alter the fuelling. Anything disposing of the catalyser box or exhaust noise reduction valve requires a remap. The valves are prone to seizure and have to be kept lubed.

GEARBOX ISSUES

Problems with gearboxes are very rare. But either a sloppy-feeling gearchange lever, or being stuck in gear can indicate a broken selector spring.

ENGINE

Power is not in short supply, with a claimed maximum of 150bhp. The re-tuned 1198 sportsbike V-twin boasts plenty of usable stomp to make acceleration strong and effective. Four different riding modes allow you to tune its character to suit your tastes.

POROUS CYLINDER HEADS

Some cylinder heads have been known to leak coolant into the exhaust port. Symptoms include smoking on start up, puddles under the engine, poor starting after being unused for a while, or failed lambda sensors, which then cause poor running.

ÖHLINS' FORK CRACKING

Overtightening the wheel axle clamping bolts can lead to cracks in the fork legs. Torque them to the correct settings.

Europe. Expect annual mileage to be around 5000. They tend not to modify their bikes beyond the fitting of exhausts and cosmetic parts. Engine modifications are rare, even if there are plenty of go faster parts available for the re-tuned 1198 sportsbike motor.

S models from 2013-on are the most sorted bikes and the ones to go for, particularly because of the advantages offered by the excellent Skyhook semi-active suspension. Rear shock ECUs have been known to fail on some early machines. Checking service history is important. Ducati's reputation is better than ever, so much that some experts say going beyond a recommended service interval isn't the issue it once was. Even so, major jobs such as cam belt replacement should still be taken

seriously. Get evidence the work has been done. Engine problems are rare if it's looked after, though minor faults aren't totally unheard of on the first bikes built. Fuelling on early Multistradas wasn't perfect but software mapping was regularly updated. If you download the latest version, your bike will run very well and be more economical.

Electrical problems aren't too common, though issues with the electronic steering lock have been known – mainly failing to lock, rather than unlock. Wheel speed sensors can pack up affecting the ABS system. It's important to keep the battery charged, so buy and use a trickle charger any time you possibly can whenever storing your bike.

MODEL VARIANTS

There are five models in all. The basic version has ABS as an option, though it's standard from 2012. The S Sport comes with Öhlins electronic suspension and carbon parts, while the S Touring is fitted with panniers, heated grips and centrestand. The S GT comes with larger panniers, and the limited-edition Pikes Peak version has special paint, exhaust and wheels.

Honda CB900FZ

NEARLY PERFECT:

The 1979 Honda CB900FZ

It came so close to getting that nirvana of power and handling but there was just something missing to turn the package into great sales...

WORDS: Roland Brown





Six years after Kawasaki launched its Z1 motor, Honda stepped up to the plate with this - 94bhp at 9000rpm made sure to keep things lively.

When Honda launched the retro-styled CB1100 four a couple of years ago, the company made lots of reference to the CB750 that began the Superbike era in 1969. Fair enough, because it's arguably the most important bike of all time. But for plenty of motorcyclists who recall the early Eighties, that modern air-cooled Honda, with its angular styling and twin shocks, was far more reminiscent of the CB900F that had become the firm's first litre-class four on its launch in 1979.

At the end of the Seventies decade that had been so brilliantly illuminated by that first CB750, Honda was badly in need of a best-selling Superbike to win back sales from Kawasaki's still-popular Z1000 and Suzuki's recently launched, and impressively fast and refined, GS1000. Honda's single-cam CB750 had long been uncompetitive with the big dohc fours, and the previous year's mighty six-cylinder CBX1000, for all its performance and panache, was proving too expensive to sell in great numbers.

The 900FZ, which was closely followed by a similarly styled CB750FZ, pitched Honda straight into the hard-fought Superbike battle. It arrived backed by a big promotional campaign based on its race-developed technology. "It's a powerhouse that has evolved directly from our all-conquering Endurance RCB machine," ran the advertising line. "A thundering Super Sports bike with devastating performance and unwavering stamina that will be setting the pace for many years to come."

The hype and racing references were largely justified. Honda's mighty 1000cc RCB fours had dominated European endurance racing in the hands of riders such as the great French duo Christian Leon and Jean-Claude Chemarin. (In 1978, the RCBs took the first three places in Bol d'Or and won a third consecutive Coupe d'Endurance championship.) The CB900F was no race-replica, but its development had clearly been influenced by the RCB.

In contrast to most previous Superbikes, which had been designed with the American market in mind, the 900F was aimed at Europe, and initially was not even sold in the States. Its angular Eurostyle shape, with fuel tank blending into sidepanels, was pleasant in an understated (some would say bland) sort of way. There was definitely none of the CBX six's flamboyance here. Instead the 900F, with its twin silencers, looked very similar to Honda's humble CB400 Super Dream - a fact that did the bigger bike no favours.

The 901cc engine was the bike's star attraction, finally giving Honda a big twin-cam powerplant six years after the arrival of Kawasaki's Z1. The 16-valve unit had fairly long-stroke dimensions of 64.5 x 69mm, and produced a claimed maximum of 94bhp at 9000rpm. It was conventional in design, apart from its two camchains: the first running from crankshaft to exhaust cam, the second from exhaust to inlet.

Most late-Seventies Superbikes were tuned for strong midrange torque as much as top-end horsepower, and that was true of the CB900F. Its torque peak of 55.3lb-ft was 20% down on the output of Kawasaki's two-valve Z1000, to name one important rival. But the Honda had no power band to speak of, and delivered arm-stretching acceleration from almost anywhere on the dial.

There was nothing obviously special about the 900F's twin-downtube frame, which featured a top spine of three steel tubes, and had a removable lower rail to aid engine removal. But it was considerably stronger than many of its predecessors, and was fitted with suspension of a quality that only Suzuki's GS1000, of rival Japanese fours, could match. The FVQ shocks were adjustable for compression and rebound damping, as well as the normal spring preload.

The result was a fast, smooth-running and generally refined Superbike that also handled impressively, and maybe just lacked a bit of the CBX's glamour in terms of appealing to the performance-crazed motorcycling public. It received a largely positive reception from the biking press, with one mag's tester describing it as "a motorcycle that does most things excellently, and the rest merely very well".

The Honda was certainly a match for Kawasaki's rival Z1000, whose days as Superbike class yardstick were by this time over. "As a fast, good-handling Japanese bike,

What to look out for

The CB900 was just one of several Honda models of its era to suffer with camchain related problems, but as with most classics you probably don't need to worry too much about horror stories from when the bike was new. "All those things happened 35 years ago, so any bike that's running now will have had them sorted out," says Charlie Garratt.

That's not to say that you shouldn't be aware of the Honda's two camchains, and make sure they don't make too much noise. "They all clatter and chatter at tickover but it should clean up when you rev the engine," Charlie says. "If it makes a filthy noise then you do need to worry."

The Honda's electrics can overheat and cause problems, but the main issue with elderly CB900Fs is likely to be related to carburation, especially if the bike has been standing unused for a long time. "The carbs can be a nightmare; it's often very hard to sort them and get the bike running right unless you're prepared to strip them completely," Charlie says.

Parts availability is pretty good, with a few typically difficult areas such as genuine exhaust systems. "That does affect values, and original is always king when you're buying a classic," says Charlie. "But many people are accepting of a decent four-into-one."

There was little to make the CB look remarkable, in fact it looked a lot like the CB400 Super Dream, which hurt it's sales...

the only competitor that comes near it is the Suzuki GS1000," the same tester wrote. "The potent four-cylinder motor delivers 95bhp in a thoroughly civilised manner... The chassis is the best Honda has ever produced."

Praise indeed, but it didn't result in the CB900F being a big hit immediately after it was launched, and the bike's chances weren't helped when rumours emerged of camchain and con rod problems. But the four sold respectably well, and succeeded in establishing Honda as a large-capacity Superbike force, as well as forming the basis for the stunning, race-ready CB1100R, which arrived in 1982 with its large extra dose of power, chassis performance, fully faired looks and track-ready glamour.

By that time Honda had also updated the CB900F several times, gradually improving it along the way. The first, CB900FZ had non-adjustable 35mm forks, conventional five-spoke Comstar wheels, single-piston brake calipers and plastic swingarm bushes. The following year it was replaced by the CB900FA, which substituted air-assisted forks, reversed Comstars and needle-roller swingarm bearings. A year later, the CB900FB had larger, 37mm forks and twin-pot front calipers, as well as modifications to the camchain tensioner and cylinder head.

Honda also added to the standard four in 1981 with the CB900F2B, or "Far 2 Big", a sports-touring version with a three-quarter style fairing (cut away to show much of the engine) that also contained a clock and voltmeter. For 1982, this became the F2C, and was joined by a further modified naked model, the CB900FC, which had a rubber-mounted engine, TRAC anti-dive, larger-still 39mm diameter front forks, new three-spoke Comstars, and an 18- instead of 19-in front wheel.

Those mods all helped, and the 1983 arrival of the CB900FD with its black-finished engine and pillion grab-rail did no harm either. But by this time Honda's slightly ageing naked four was up against the likes of Suzuki's Katana and Kawasaki's half-faired, monoshock-chassised GPz1100, and had pretty much faded into obscurity while its CB1100R sibling continued to outclass all opposition on the track.

The CB900F was finally dropped in 1984, to make way for the V4-engined VF1000F, without ever having



The result was a fast, smooth-running and generally refined Superbike that also handled impressively

Specification

**HONDA
CB900FZ (1979)**

Engine type: Air-cooled dohc, 16-valve transverse four

Displacement: 901cc

Bore x stroke: 64.5 x 69mm

Compression ratio: 8.8:1

Carburation: 4 x 32mm Keihin

Claimed power: 94bhp @ 9000rpm

Transmission: 5-speed

Electrics: 12v battery; 60/55W headlamp

Frame: Tubular steel cradle

Suspension: Front; Telescopic, air-assisted
Rear; Twin shock absorbers, adjustable preload, compression and rebound damping

Brakes: Front; Twin 276mm discs, single-piston calipers
Rear; 296mm disc, single-piston caliper

Tyres: Front; 3.25 x 19in
Rear; 4.00 x 18in

Wheelbase: 1516mm

Seat height: 810mm

Fuel capacity: 20 litres

Weight: 233kg dry



LEFT: A serious motorcycle of the time but by today's standards she's a big softy in the comfort stakes.

BELOW: What you see here is what a lot of 1970s Superbike fans would call 'standard fare'. Simple to read at pace.

been quite the success Honda had hoped. Back in 1979, one tester had been driven to describe the 900F as “the nearest any manufacturer has come to producing the perfect motorcycle”. It was certainly a fine bike in many ways, and a good example can still make a sound buy even now. But perhaps the CB900F just lacked the sparkle needed to make a bigger and more lasting impact.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO RIDE?

My first impression was surprise at the riding position. The Honda has the tall, roomy, heavy feel typical of the Superbikes of its era. But its handlebars are quite flat, and the footrests much further back than I'd expected. Compared with any recent sportsbike, the 900F is a big softy but in the days before race-replicas, such a riding position was evidence of a seriously sporty nature.

Back in 1979, the Honda was criticised for its lack of low-rev torque, but this bike didn't feel too bad. The row



REFLECTIONS

SEAT

Like even the sportiest of Seventies Superbikes, the CB900F came with a generously padded dual-seat, but the pillion wouldn't be treated to a grab-rail until the CB900FD was launched in 1983

ENGINE

The air-cooled 901cc four had a dohc, four-valves-per-cylinder layout, and long-stroke dimensions of 64.5 x 69mm. Its 94bhp peak output was respectable but couldn't match the CBX1000's 105bhp

PETROL TANK

Honda's angular Eurostyle look was shared with the CB750F as well as the smaller CB400 and 250 twins. Although regarded as slightly bland in its day, the big four's styling has aged very well

HANDLEBARS

The CB900F was designed for European markets with slightly raised alloy clip-ons that gave a sporty riding position. Some US market bikes had a conventional one-piece bar and are less desirable

FORKS

This 1981-model CB900FB benefits from the larger diameter, 37mm front forks that were introduced in that year, along with the air-assistance that came in with the previous year's CB900FA



of 32mm Keihin CV carbs delivered a crisp throttle response from just off idle, and pulled cleanly in top gear with less than 4000rpm showing on the black-faced tacho. When I needed a quick burst of speed on a crowded motorway, there was no need to drop down a cog in the reasonably smooth five-speed gearbox.

Simply winding open the throttle sent the 900F surging forward, picking up impetus as the revs rose towards the 9500rpm redline. At 90mph the motor's slight high-frequency vibration made it feel rather busy. But the leant-forward riding position and broad seat made the Honda comfortable, even if that wouldn't have remained true all the way to the bike's 130mph top speed.

The Honda's chassis worked well enough to ensure that when a curve appeared there was no need to slow down to prevent the bike going into a big weave – as the aforementioned Z1000, to name just one contemporary rival, might have done. High-speed stability was very good, and even all these years later I could understand why that contemporary tester was inspired to describe the 900F's chassis as the best Honda had ever produced.

This bike had gained a pair of Koni shocks over the years, plus a combination of Taiwanese front and Pirelli Phantom rear tyres on its 19-in front, 18-in rear Comstar wheels. Crossing white lines made the bike shake its head in annoyance, but it quickly settled down again, and the rest of the time the 900F did pretty much what it was asked. Despite its 233kg of weight and old-fashioned geometry, it steered reasonably easily and had

enough ground clearance to make fast cornering fun.

Only the brakes really showed their age. As a 1981 model, this CB900FB had already been upgraded with twin-piston front calipers, in place of the even more feeble single-pot ones of the original model. But the front stopper needed a firm squeeze to make much happen, and the rear disc was too easily locked to be of much use. Of course this bike's stoppers were far from new, so it's hardly fair to make direct comparisons with the ABS-equipped brake of a modern bike such as Honda's CB1100. But it's still enlightening to realise how far some aspects of motorcycling performance have improved in the last few decades.

FRONT BRAKE

The CB900FB also gained twin-piston front brake calipers to replace the earlier models' single-pot items, but with the discs having a diameter of just 276mm the stopper remained unexceptional

What's it worth?

The CB900F hasn't been among the most popular classics over the years but has plenty going for it as a rideable classic, as increasing numbers of people seem to be realising. "They're definitely on the up," says Charlie Garratt of Oxford Classic Honda (www.classichondamotorcycles.co.uk). "Five or six years ago I'd have been wary of buying one because there wasn't much demand, but now if I got offered one I'd be happy to take it. Now CBX1000 prices have got so high, people seem to regard the CB900 as a decent alternative."

This increased demand is reflected in prices, although the Honda remains excellent value compared with something like an early Kawasaki four. "You're looking at £3500-£4500 for a really nice early example, and maybe £1500-£1750 for a scruffy runner," Charlie says. "Later models are in less demand, so more like £3000 top for one of those."

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BMW 1200RT SE 26k, July 12, exc cond, serviced, met blue, ABS, e/s, panniers, h/grips and seat, c/c, adj screen, tyre air pressure monitor, cyl protectors, £7995. Tel. 07788 593463. Oxon.



BMW K1100 LT 1998, 76k, full s/h, just MoT'd, vgc for year, miles good, tyres 4mm, thread, had much tlc, owned from new, £2750. Tel. 01733 568688. Cambs.



BMW R850R 2003, 6 sp, 50k miles, panniers, t/box, tank bag, e/guards, h/grips, w/shop manual, MoT Mar (will renew), £2300 or p/x lighter bike (750 to 500cc twin?). 01325 721669. Darlington.



BOSS HOSS TRIKE 1996, 3 owners with full history, Chevy 5.7 with 3-sp auto gearbox, lovely rare example, £22,995. Tel. 01895 624554. Herts



FAT BOY SPECIAL 2011, 7k, immac, new tyres, sat nav, speakers, Stage 2 tuned, P/Commander, panniers V&H many extras plus HOG no plate. Tel. 07917 638300. Cambs



HARLEY DAVIDSON Fat Bob FXDF, black, 9,600 miles, loads of extras, custom paint, Samson exhaust, side plate, rear LED, tacho, ++58 plate, £9300 ono. Tel. 0773 4078912. Leics.



HARLEY DAVIDSON totally pristine, unreg, unused, VRSCA V-Rod, 2003, 2-tone silver/black, Gold Key accessory package inc, m/c cover, £24,995. Tel. 07984 969293. Gtr London.



H/DAVIDSON 1450 FLSTC 2005 Heritage Softail 4,500 miles, one previous owner completely std with only factory extras, saddle bags f/boards f&r, £9450. Tel. 07875 179302. Warks.



HARLEY DAVIDSON FXDC Superglide Custom, 2010, MoT Aug, near mint condition, back rack, back rest, heated grips. Tel. 07880 712544. Avon



HARLEY DAVIDSON XL 1200C Anniversary Sportster, 100th Anniversary, MoT Aug 15, tax Jul 15, 4,800 miles, 2003 reg, good cond, £3800. Tel. Martin 07979 800533. Worcs



HARLEY DAVIDSON XLH 883 Sportster, 2003, 21k, full s/h, full MoT, service, many chrome extras, loud pipes and stds, touring seat, £3350 ono. Tel. 01803 310250. Devon.



HARLEY SPORTSTER XL 1200 2004, Custom, silver, exc, low mileage cond, Stage One tune, back rest, rear rack, full history, £4500. Tel. 07798 866071. Middx.



HONDA CBR 125R 2013, with only 183 miles, still under warranty, exc cond, previously stolen, recovered without damage. Tel. 07800 867053. Gtr London.



HONDA NC700 INTEGRA 2012, 6 speed, twin clutch, auto/ tiptronic, 70+ mpg, ABS, 35 ltr, Givi panniers, Honda warranty til Sept 15, £5500 ovno. Tel. 07798 842421. Somerset.



HONDA PAN EUROPEAN ST 1100 2000 (X), blue, gc, 29k, MoT, MRA Vario-screen Maxi (+ orig screen), waxoiled s/arm, chassis, wind deflectors, h/grips, £2750 ono. 07966 264905. Gtr London.



HONDA SH300 SCOOTER auto, 24k miles, 08 reg, MoT March 2016, ABS, front screen, silver, £995 ovno. Tel. 07772 797112. Derbys



HONDA ST1100 PAN 1999, 27k miles, well looked after, complete stainless exhaust, Corben seat, ready to tour, give us a call, £3000. Tel. 01706 750932. Lancs



KAWASAKI 750 ZR7S 2003, Sorned since Aug 14, MoT July 15, 21k miles, good tyres, h/grips, top box, need something smaller and lighter now, £1750 ono. Tel. 01373 300924. Somerset



KAWASAKI ER6F 650cc, 2012, 6100, taxed, Racing green, fitted extras, rear seat cowl, rear hugger, one owner from new, garaged, £3800. Tel. 07503 3235215. Lincs



KAWASAKI NINJA ZX10R 2007, MoT, s/h, Meta alarm with two fobs, three keys inc red one, lots of paperwork, 25,700 miles, very quick bike @ £3800 no offers or p/x. 07752 127553. Gtr London.



KAWASAKI W650 2002, red/cream, 12k miles, Givi screen, new tyres, good condition, MoT Dec 15, £3400. Tel. 07711 107649. S Wales



KAWASAKI Z1000 Special Edition, Sugomi design, 14 plate, 1,908 miles, Powerbronze screen, as new, kept in garage under dust cover, £7750. Tel. 0203 5387788. Gtr London



MOTO GUZZI CALIFORNIA 1100, 1994, blue, s/s pipes and silencers, s/s mudguards and trims, serviced, 24k, immac, £3795 ono; possible p/x Nevada. Tel. 01977 510546. W Yorks.



MV AGUSTA F4 750 fabulous, blue/silver, 2002, 8,765 miles, needs MoT April, £5750. Tel. 07826 879247; 01291 430677. Monmouthshire.



ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET 2010, Electra Classic EFI, 500 cc, electric and kick start, new Avon tyres, touring screen, spares included, 7500 miles, mint, £2750. 01388 608132. Durham.



SUZUKI BANDIT 1200S 1997, low miles by mature owner, standard condition, 12 months' MoT, £2000 ono. Tel. 01724 733996. Lincs.



TRIUMPH SPRINT 1050ST 2011, one owner, 7,200 miles, blue, top box, Michelin PR3S, excellent condition, £5495. Tel. 07986 973033. W Sussex.



TRIUMPH TROPHY 1200 one owner, full history, h/grips, coded top box, other extras fitted, 2001 with 13,500 miles, mint condition, any inspection, £3000 no offers. Tel. 01502 539825. Norfolk.



YAMAHA XT 600E the last of the air-cooled, cartooned models, 2003, 27k, full s/h, recent Avon Distancia tyres and C&S, h/grips, £2300 ono. Tel. Mark 07817 393092. W Sussex.



ZX 10R 2007, MoT, s/h, Meta alarm with 2 fobs, 3 keys inc the red one, lots of paperwork, 25,700 miles, serviced regularly. Tel. 07752 127553. Gtr London.



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FOR SALE

2 YAMAHA 600 Diversions, 2000, W and 2001 Y, MoT, need putting back together, lots of new parts inc tyres, both runners, make really good one and keep the other for spares or build two bikes, £600 the pair. Tel. 07798 794220. W Worcs.

APRILIA RSV MILLE SWAP 2002, superb cond, 21k, psh, maintained regardless by myself for past 7 yrs, too much to list, call for info if interested, swap for Retro/Naked in similar condition. Tel. 07956 208091. Derbys.

APRILIA RX 125 Trail bike, 1991, good starter, runs well, £1100 ono. Tel. 07749 602721. Lincs.

BMW K1, 1990, blue/yellow, full MoT and history, 54k, paintwork excellent, only few tyre changing chips on wheel rims, iconic classic and rare, £2950 ono. Tel. 01535 636326; 07780 476870. W Yorks.

BMW K100 LT 1000cc, full spec, fairing, panniers, top box, runner, very reliable, for spares or repair, £500. Tel. 02392 595307. Hants.

BMW K100 RS 16v, 1990, green met paint, 71k, good mechanical order, some chips on paintwork to be expected with age, £800. Tel. 01594 530979. Glos.

HARLEY FXBD 'STREET-BOB' 103 cu ins Oct 2013, black, 4,250 miles, alarmed, ABS, clean bike, £9500. Tel. David 01483 234589; 07952 036624. Surrey.

HONDA C90 Eco, elc start, genuine 2,250 miles, X plate, 2000, age related marks, will have 12 mths MoT on sale, met red, £1395 ono. Tel. 07896 354751 for more info. W Mids.

HONDA CB 1300 black, naked, 08, K7037, if you really want a CB1300 view this one, best muscle bike ride, magazine, many extras, just had oil filter, Castrol Acecto, K&N. Tel. 01452 780280. Glos.

HONDA CBR 1000F 1989, 'F', red/white/blue, new MoT, 44k miles, excellent condition, ready to go, £1400. Tel. 0208 3012913. S E London/W Kent.

HONDA HORNET 600F 2003, standard Honda exhaust system removed from the bike in 2004 at 700 miles when a new complete Scorpion system was fitted, unmarked condition, would cost to replace today £900, accept £285 cash on collection. Tel. 01723 515546. N Yorks.

HONDA NSC 110 mint, 2014, super 100kg bike, "£1000 less than new", many extras, always garaged, 1,400 miles only, mature rider, £1395. Tel. 077890 61218. Yorks/Humbs.

HONDA NT 650V 1998, (pre-HISS) model, c/w spare CDI, coils and stator/alternator, runs and rides great but I don't ride it very much, MoT runs out 07/03/15, approx 60k, with history back to 2007, £650. Tel. Simon 01784 461961 for further details. Surrey.

HONDA SL 350 K1 1970, imported by me from Texas in 2013, MoT to be done next month (March), looks like a 5 year-old, nice patina, all factory original, selling due to having another one I am restoring coming to completion. Tel. 01227 360735. Kent. Email: David_mccormick@talk21.com

HONDA SLR TYPE trail, 650cc, 1998/9 Single DOHC twin port exhausts, electric start, alloy wheels, red/blue seat, MoT, vgc, no faults, good battery, needs good home, find another! firm £1250 cash. Tel. 07799 847631. Bedford.

HONDA CBR 400RR NC29, 1991, b/grey, owned 12 years, MoT 2015, art can plus s/stand, £1200 ono. Tel. 01604 642687. Northants.

KAWASAKI ER-5 500cc, blue, Nov 1999, just 3,900 miles with small engine bars, flyscreen, tool kit, MoT July, injured left hand, going back to a scooter, £1100. Tel. 07546 890419 (not 3-6pm). Kent.

KAWASAKI ZZR 1400 black/gold wheels, 3k miles only, mint condition, 2010, MoT, two owners, owned for 3 years, good reason for sale, £6300 ono. Tel. 07963 518759. Lincs.

PIRELLI ANGEL ST 180/55Z R17 tyre, never fitted as bike now sold, £90 ono. Tel. 0789 4078815. Notts.

SCRAMBLER PROJECT leaves spares from 1994 BMW R80 RT, original cockpit, seat, panniers, side panels, silencer, rear shock etc, will sell all for £100 or individually. Tel. 07732 475211. Tyne & Wear.

SUZUKI GS 650GT Shaft drive, 1985, good condition for age, recently serviced, good tyres and MoT until July 2015, 4-in-1 Motad, on Sorn, £775. Tel. 07986 335910. Bucks.

SUZUKI GS 850G 1979, T reg, black, 42,500 miles, Sorned, no MoT, excellent condition, great runner, needs two tyres for MoT, standard UK bike, £1640 ono. Tel. 07967 970506. Cornwall.

SUZUKI GSX 1400 M.T.C. exhaust can including link pipe and all fixings, with removable baffle, £80 plus post. Tel. 01865 849759. Oxfordshire.

SUZUKI HAYABUSA 1340cc, 2010, 22k miles, black/red, hugger, Scottolier, £5300. Tel. 07801 298132. Scotland.

TOMOS A3ML 50cc, spares or repair, never been registered, this can be done at DVLA, it has been restored but not finished, needs stickers, seat cover, horn, sold as seen, £400 ono. Tel. 07765 158047. Durham.

TRIUMPH AMERICA 2012, blue/white, 1800 miles, full s/h, accessories inc Triumph screen, foot boards, sissy bar, pannier rails, dresser bars Triumph load pipes, chrome clutch cover, tool roll, internal dust cover, bike as new, mature owner sale, £5250. Tel. 01962 865120. Hants.

TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE 2001, Y, red/silver, 4.5k miles by one owner from new, excellent, Sorned, can MoT, Givi panniers and top box, oiro £2750. Derbys. Email: DerekBrock01@tiscali.co.uk for photos.

YAMAHA DT 125 A/C, 2T engine, 19,700 miles, running condition, £250; Yamaha 7" 2L/S hub, new shoes, £80; Yamaha N.O.S. alloy rims, 18", pair, £100; long term OAP, more dreams than time. £100 long term OAP. Tel. 01293 410976. Gatwick.

YAMAHA SR500 500cc, 1978, black/red, lovely original classic single, new tyres, battery, 37k miles, first to see will buy, MoT May 15, £2750. Tel. 07912 185478. Tyneside.

YAMAHA RD 250C blue, good engine, mint condition, standard, reconditioned, new wheels, shocks, £2800. Tel. 07808 761159. Somerset.

YAMAHA SRX 600cc, 1986, nice condition, silver, original, also Yamaha ST 550, dismantled, complete, also Honda CB 250RS, dismantled, complete plus spare CB250 RS, two engines etc, £1600 ono. Tel. 01484 682822 (daytime). Huddersfield, Yorks.

YAMAHA RD 250F red/white, good cond, one owner, last on road 84, p/coated frame, resprayed tank, new seat, all speeds, new tyres, chain, sprockets, £3000. Tel. 07808 761159. Somerset.

YAMAHA TY 80 kids trials bike, stolen and recovered, need some work, £250. Tel. 07922 185110. E Sussex.

YAMAHA XS 650 pots, £50; Kawasaki GPZ 900, new, used, spares, plastics, switches, etc, £150; Triumph Bonneville 750, 5-speed gears, £350; TT carb amal, £350; Triumph Speedmaster seat, new, £100. Tel. 07956 121054. Worcs.

YAMAHA XV 650 Dragster Classic, 2005, exhaust as new, £500 ono. Tel. 01302 327797; 07762 873456. Yorks.

PARTS FOR SALE

CONVERT YOUR SUPER TENERE into a World Crossover, Acropovic exhaust, Touratech comfort seat, MRA screen, SW Motech side racks for Givi boxes, lots of other Touratech bits, sell as lot or will split. Tel. 07776 493343. Norfolk.

HYDRAULIC M/C LIFT second hand but good used condition and very clean, little private use, buyer collects.. Tel. Alan on 01268 775184. Essex.

KAWASAKI W800 pair unused exhaust/silencers, £300. Tel. 01661 853032. Northumberland.

SUZUKI GSX 1400 genuine Yoshimura twin outlet exhaust and link pipe as fitted to the Final Edition, immac unused cond, £170, also polished 4-in-to-1 collector box for the same bike, £70. Tel. 07971 448463. W Mids.

BMW F800 ST 800cc, Hepco & Becker pannier frames and rack, used once, £130; Baglux tank cover, used once, £60. £60. Tel. 07900 944783. S Yorks.

BMW R1200 RT/R1200 ST factory panniers, 2005, red, slight scuffs on lids with keys, £25. Tel. 07903 380308. Enfield, London.

BMW R80RT 1994, parts for sale, Street Scrambler project makes panniers, side panels, orig rear shock, windscreens, seat, cockpit etc surplus, will sell all for £100 willing to sell individual parts. Tel. 01912 365047. Tyne & Wear.

FAZER FZS PARTS for sale: Full set of carbs - only 28k on them, grab rail, carbon effect wing mirrors, d/bubble, black tint fairing screen (almost new), original clear fairing screen, front light/nose cone unit, rear foot peg set, original seat - with gel insert - professionally installed and recovered in its original black leather, side stand, shortened version, belly pan - black, original 4 indica-tors lens, plus the original complete brake light, brand new crash bungs. Tel. 078310 90190. Beds.

FULL STANDARD EXHAUST SYSTEM for 2003/4 Kawasaki Z1000, absolutely mint, taken off bike when 3 months old in 2004, been dry stored for the last 10 years in boxes, £125. Tel. 07881 841215. Cambs.

BSA BANTAM D7 engine unit, good sound cases, no broken fins (history unknown), ideal for rebuild or spares etc, £250. Tel. 01268 735135 for details. Essex.

HARLEY DAVIDSON BITS Harley Fatboy exhaust silencers, under over shotgun type, vgc, £50 the pair; Sportster rear rack with back rest, £25. Tel. 0208 3022283. Kent.

DUCATI EXHAUST STAND-ARD CANS for 748, with chip, only 2,500 dry miles, £90. Email: jobocar6@liv.co.uk

HONDA 650 DEAUVILLE spares. Tel. 01784 461961 for details. Surrey.

HONDA CD 185/200 spares, saddle, tank, f/wheel, loom and lots more, main colour blue, all the hard to find bits, guards etc. Tel. 01643 821431 for lists. Somerset.

HONDA GOLDWING 1500 GLSE converting to trike, all rear end parts for sale inc new tyre on wheel, panniers, trims, rear brakes etc. Tel. 07402 989970. Leics.

HYDRAULIC M/C LIFT s/h, but in good used condition and very clean, little private use, buyer collects. Tel. Alan on 01268 775841. Essex.

JARDINE EXHAUST SYSTEM for Honda F6C Valkyrie, nice tone, not too loud, £160. Tel. 07711 539523. W Sussex.

KAWASAKI ER6F rear luggage carrier, £45; radiator guard, stainless, £40; tinted high screen, £40; 3 oil filters, £15; two front footrests, £15; rear hugger, £45; ER6 workshop manual, £20; dynamic leathers, Belstaff style jacket, size 40, £50; Suzuki 600 Bandit workshop manual, £20; new rear shockers in box for 125cc, £30; jack gauges for 4 carb set up, £40. Tel. 01484 350451; 07532 335938. W Yorks.

KAWASAKI ER6F ACCESSORIES tinted tall screen, £35; rear hugger, £35; stainless radiator guard, £40; rear luggage carrier, £30; alloy h/bar clamp, £10; brake reservoir cover, £10; f/footrests, £20; three oil filters, £15; workshop manual, £15; Rickman 30ltr top box, £20; new r/shocks for KH 125, £30; car tuning gauges, £40. Tel. 01484 350451; 07532 335938. W Yorks.

KAWASAKI ER6N latest model high screen, genuine Kawasaki accessory, good cond, £30. Tel. 01746 780522. Shrops/W Mids area.

KAWASAKI ZXR 750 H1 Tokico 4 piston caliper, front right side, £30. Tel. 0151 6069983. Wirral.

LOTS OF GL1200 SPARES CBF 1000, tan leather tank cover, £50; CBF 1000 mudguard/front, £35; Thunderbird Legend Adventurer chain guard, mint, £20; Spada camouflage gloves, unused, large, £10; Vulcan 500 manual, £10. Tel. 07434 513161. Lancs/Cumbria.

REMUS SPORTS CANS for BMW K1600, 2 yrs old, as new, £250; H-D 2008 Road King exhausts never used, £150. Tel. 07968 328495. Northants.

SUZUKI BANDIT 600 investment, carbs, valves, services, new oil/filters, pads, tyres, battery, belly pan, stainless bits, hugger, pensioner owner, 7,200 miles, non butter, firm £1800. Tel. 01547 528465. Powys.

SUZUKI 1250 BANDIT Hagon rear suspension unit, £75; Micron road legal silencer with removable baffle, £60; both items in good condition. Tel. 01746 780522. Shrops/W Mids.

SUZUKI BANDIT 1250 hugger, £30; silencer, £80. Tel. 07801 298132. Dumfries, Scotland.

SUZUKI GSX 650F/650 Bandit, top case, rack with monkey fittings, £30; genuine Suzuki GSX 650F clear screen, as new condition, used once, £30. Tel. 01746 780522. Shrops/W Mids.

SUZUKI GSX 650F/600/650/1200K/1250 Bandit Renntec chrome rear carrier, vgc, £25. Tel. 01746 780522. Shrops/W Mids.

SUZUKI GK71F 400cc, front wheel with discs, set of carbs, Suzuki 800cc spares or repair, £350. Tel. 078311 88224. N Wales.

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE 2002, end can, still in the box, set of mirrors and indicators, Offers Tel. 07760 571399. Surrey.

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE 955i, (2000 parts), EBC R pads, £6; Triumph oil filter, £6; mag clutch cover, new, £30; standard rear section, new, unused exhaust, £45; rear Alcantara seat unit, £25; paddock stand, rear, £35; f/wheel and tyre (silver), £35.. Tel. 07919 800699. Derbys.

TRIUMPH ST TRIPLE BAR end mirrors, genuine Triumph parts, not used, as new, £100 inc p&p. Tel. 07504 174923. Kent.

TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE 2013, bar end mirrors, £100 inc p&p; comfort seat, £100 inc p&p; front fork protector, £25 inc p&p; all genuine Triumph parts and as new. Tel. 07504 174923. Kent.

TRIUMPH TIGER SEATS seats, brand new, one for 1050, one for Tiger Sport, £10 each; also standard screen, fits either, good condition, not new, £30.. Tel. 0208 3012913. S London.

UNDER SEAT EXHAUST to fit Honda CBR 600RR, as new, £70 ono. Tel. 01604 642687. Northants.

VFR 1200 SCORPION Red power carbon exhaust can, £25. Tel. 01204 883999. Gtr Man.

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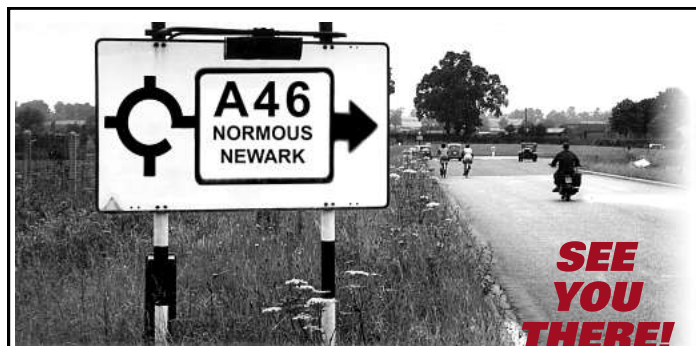


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Smoking the congestion problem

Steve Rose



Smoking is bad for you. Everybody knows this. Smoking causes horrific illnesses and then kills you. Two generations have grown up knowing this and yet half the people under 30 seem to have a fag on. The latest attempt to curb this replaces tobacco branding on the packet with detailed photos of the damage done by tobacco. There is also a proposed ban on smoking in cars because the passive fumes are killing our children.

I have a better idea. Introduce a tobacco licence system whereby in order to smoke you have to first take CBS or Compulsory Basic Smoking – a one day course where they teach you basic stuff (opening the packet, lighting the correct end, making the right noise as you exhale etc.).

After completing CBS you can then legally smoke coconut tobacco and sweet cigarettes for two years by which time you must either obtain a full licence or retake your CBS. To get a full licence you will need training in smoking techniques (inhaling properly, blowing smoke rings etc.) and then you can take a test. Having passed your test (under 25) you can then smoke low tar and menthols. Once over 25 a pipe and cigars too.

That should pretty much stop smoking overnight.

There's a lot of talk in the bike trade right now about getting youngsters on bikes. The usual reasons for the scarcity are that the licensing is way too complex or society has led them to believe biking is dangerous.

Maybe, just to finally put the boot in, we should remove all branding and paint schemes from motorcycles and plaster the fairing panels with images of biking injuries. The biggest deterrent to kids getting on bikes is not the danger, or the cost (of the bikes), it's just the all-out difficulty in even understanding the current licensing system, never mind trying to get one.

Funnily enough, we recently had the boss of the Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA) pay us a visit. Their new policy framework (developed with senior police officers) aims to get motorcycling back on the agenda and get more people on bikes. It's a really good idea – long term thinking, not just soundbites. The proposition is radical – more bikes reduces casualties. A good headline backed by impressive statistics demonstrating how countries where motorcycle use is high have a reduced accident rate as a percentage of all traffic casualties (the opposite of what you'd expect).

Now, more bikes still means more accidents in the same way that more planes mean more crashes too – but even so, as the ratio of bikes-to-cars gets greater you would expect the ratio of rider casualties involving riders to go up also and it doesn't. Even in Italy where every

If we want the youth to stop doing anything harmful then all we have to do is follow the motorcycle licensing programme... honest!

rider looks like a statistic in waiting. So how do you get more people on bikes? Who is the ambassador that makes the difference? None of us, that's for sure. Biking 2015 is middle-aged; the riders are middle-aged, the dealers look like car showrooms, the media is middle-aged and I'm sure almost everyone at the MCIA is middle-aged too.

If you saw the Harley-Davidson stand at last year's bike show you'll know how embarrassing it can be when we try to connect with 'the kids'. Some trendy infant rubbing a turntable into the eardrums of Harley's core customers who didn't know whether to laugh or bang a broom on the ceiling to complain.

What about the other 873 people stuck in the queue on the A421 last Tuesday? Some must have wanted to be the bloke on the ancient Fazer 600, gliding through the chaos. A study in Belgium found that replacing 20% of cars with bikes all but eliminated congestion – reducing a two-hour tailback to just 10 minutes in a major city. Which is brilliant... until you remember that motorcyclists make up around 1% of UK drivers. Getting to 20% would be nigh-on impossible.

How about the public transporters? For the cost of a season ticket you could buy a scooter, a CBT, all your kit, insurance and not spend two hours a day with your nose in Nigel's armpit. Yes, all true, but they still do it. But in among all this there is one group who can genuinely make a difference. Us. The middle-aged motorcycle majority. If all the people who have a bike licence actually rode a bike to work, not only would the roads be safer (because more riders equals safer motorcycling) but the congestion would start to ease too.

Who'd have thought that we could do so much good for everyone simply by riding more? Except, erm... I've got too much to carry, I need to look smart when I get there, by the time I've got all my kit on it's quicker by car etc. etc.

So I've got a solution to that too. Make smoking compulsory in all cars between 7am and 9am. That way you'll have the choice of poisoning your offspring in a car or eliminating congestion on a bike. See how easy it is?

Next month; how to beat Ebola with a purple headlight cover and some rabbit ears on your helmet.

Who is Rose?

Steve Rose is a high mileage road rider. A former editor of Bike and RiDE magazine and one time back street bike dealer. He's also one of the UK's most experienced and trusted road testers



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