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NO MATTER WHAT, WHERE OR HOW YOU RIDE. MOTOREX IS YOUR CHOICE!

March/April 2017

You might notice the layout of your favourite motorcycle magazine has changed. It's now portrait-oriented. We hope you like it.

On the cover of the March issue is the Yamaha MT-09 - a machine that puts a smile on your dial every time you ride it.

The 2017 model has been refined since its inception. Read the test to find out more.

There's Harley-Davidson's 110-cubic inch Fat Boy S which brings CVO performance to the iconic machine. But is it enough?

Todd tests the KTM 350 SX-F which has received a major update to the front-end with WP AER 48 air forks. Will it put you at the pointy end? We find out.

Ryan put the 2017 Kawasaki Ninja 650L and Z650L learners through their paces at the recent press launch and came away pretty impressed with the machines. Both machines have dropped a significant amount of weight and feature handy low- to mid-range performance.

While Nigel was out on safari testing the new BMW F 800 GSA - with a new electronics package and a few refinements this is BMW's most capable 800 yet.

What goes into riding the Wall of Death? Hugh Hunt , an expert on Engineering Dynamics and Vibration knows. He worked as a consultant on the hit Guy Martin show. Make sure to read the interesting feature.

Flack looks at the life and times of The Boss, Smarty does bike shops, Ryan questions the rules of retail and Norman hates naked bikes then loves them again.

Make sure you check out the latest products, reviews, news and more.

And if you have something on your mind, let us know here.

– Ryan Grubb
Digital Editor

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A Special King



Harley-Davidson has announced the Road King Special, a variant on the Milwaukee-Eight powered version currently on test with Cycle Torque.

The changes are primarily about the style, with the big screen on the standard Road King being removed and the tall handlebars being replaced with lower 'bars to remove the propensity to sit up in the breeze.

Priced at \$34,995, it's up \$1000 on the standard Road King.

Harley says "the new Road King Special is a machine that exudes a bold new attitude and a darker edge to the traditional styling and proportions of the classic Road King."

Features include a dark-shadowed front, topped by a impressive gloss-black headlamp nacelle, mini-ape handlebars, stretched saddlebags, lowered profile and dominant blacked-out livery.



"The FL series has always reflected the purity of the Harley-Davidson riding experience. By exchanging chrome surfaces for black and lowering the bike's profile, we've moved the traditional Road King into a new space that's very current in the custom bagger scene.

"Built to ride, and ride hard the Road King Special also broods with menace. Just as we designed it to," said Brad Richards, Harley-Davidson Vice-President of Styling and Design.

The Road King Special is the first model

to feature the Milwaukee-Eight in an all-black engine finish.

Matching the style and engine upgrade is the unique Road King Special 19-inch front wheel and suspension. New fork internals offer improved damping control while the rear shocks are totally redesigned, with hydraulic spring preload (rather than air) adjustment.

The Road King Special will be available in four colour options: Vivid Black, Charcoal Denim, Hot Rod Red Flake Hard Candy Custom and Olive Gold." ■

Construction contract confirmed for Tailem Bend motorsport park

Peregrine Corporation has announced a contractor based in South Australia will oversee the construction of a new racing circuit.

Once completed, The Bend Motorsport Park is set to become one of the longest circuits in the world, second only to the Nurburgring, Germany.

Riders are unlikely to experience 35-corner, 7.7km full circuit however, as it will be used for GT racing.

A 4.9km international circuit configuration has been designed for competition motorsport with fast flowing sections and tight technical challenges.

The milestone is part of a \$100 million investment by the corporation which will see it become an iconic sporting facility for South Australia championing local, national and international motorsport and major events for the state.

Dr Sam Shahin, Executive Director of the

Peregrine Corporation, said "The Bend's racing circuit is world class, with inspiration drawn from the best racing circuits around the world including Spa, Red Bull Ring, Paul Ricard, Nurburgring, Suzuka and Silverstone."

"The circuit will be a permanent bitumen race track of international standard with 35 turns, a one-kilometre long main straight and a width of 15 metres that continues into turns two and three for fantastic side-by-side racing action, and top speeds approaching 300km/h."

The State Government has invested \$7.5 million into the project, Premier Jay Weatherill said the project will become a tourist drawcard and inject millions into the State economy.

"An independent economic study has shown that once fully developed, The Bend is projected to create 1631 full time jobs and its economic impact to the state

is likely to be \$236 million in Gross State Product annually, attracting 339,000 extra visitors to the region," Mr Weatherill said.

"We promised in 2014 to invest in the Bend Motorsport Park and that's exactly what we've done.

"It's great to be here today and see the project take another step forward."

The Bend Motorsport Park will also feature a pit building, hotel and conference facilities; a purpose-built drift and karting circuit; an international Group 1 dragway; driver training facilities; an airstrip; a 4WD adventure park and an off-road facility.

The circuit is estimated to be complete by the end of 2017; the next stage of construction will see the pit building and surrounding infrastructure built creating 300 more jobs.

Commencement of construction will be announced shortly. ■

2017 Triumph RAT Rally

Triumph has announced details for the 2017 RAT Rally, April 7-9.

Following last year's event in Jindabyne, this year the Hahndorf Resort in the Adelaide Hills will host the RAT faithful.

The annual event will include two days of planned rides, demo rides on our latest models, a show-and-shine and an exclusive official Triumph merchandise pack.

Test rides will include the all-new Bobber and Street Scrambler in addition to recently launched Bonneville T100 and Street Cup.

The weekend will feature great dining and nightly entertainment alongside presentations about latest releases, professional bike and helmet pin-stripping, a photographer on hand, exclusive specials on official Triumph merchandise and much more.

There will be special guest presenters including former World Superbike rider Steve Martin, chainsaw wood sculptor Rob Bast carving out a one-of-kind auction bike and Triumph Guru, Cliff Stovall to talk all things technical with guests.

The Triumph RAT Rally is a great opportunity to



experience all the latest models Triumph have on offer and catch up with fellow friends and riders from across the country.

RAT clubs and Triumph Dealerships will be organising rides to and from the event to add even more value to the experience so stay tuned for further details in each state.

Tickets are \$200 and can be purchased through Triumph Motorcycles Australia's website. ■

International Festival of Speed

The International Festival of Speed, formerly known as the Barry Sheene Festival of Speed returns to Sydney Motorsport Park, 23-26 March.

The 2017 festival aims to celebrate Italian GP motorcycle racing at its greatest, with guest racing legends as well as an exclusive appearance of the Laverda V6.

The International Festival of Speed will feature a 50-event, four-day race programme will

feature over 400 classic race bikes, with Trans-Tasman and international racers fighting for class honours and a spot in the much anticipated tribute race, the Barry Sheene Top-50 finale.

Punters will also get the chance to meet their heroes, like 15-time GP World Champion Giacomo Agostini, as well as Piero Laverda, John McGuinness, Gianfranco Bonera, Pierfrancesco Chili, Jeremy McWilliams, Maria Costello, Steve Parrish, Troy Bayliss, Graeme Crosby, Kevin Magee and Chris Vermeulen.

An MV Agusta F3 800 signed by Agostini himself will be given away.

To purchase tickets go to internationalfestivalofspeed.com ■



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GSXR600/750 11-17, SV650 16-17. More new models being added.



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Over 20k up for grabs in Yamaha R3 Cup

Yamaha has announced the total prize pool for the R3 cup's sophomore year will exceed \$20,000.

Entry-level riders who compete in the series will be rewarded right down to fifth place in a move to keep introducing new riders to road racing.

The series champion will take home \$5,000, with \$3,000 and \$1,500 on offer for the respective runners-up; \$750 and \$500 for fourth and fifth.

A race win will earn riders \$175, with \$250 to be distributed from second to fifth places.

Overall place-getters for each of the five rounds can win up to \$500, while two incentive awards of \$75 will be given out each round.

Because the R3 Cup is designed as an entry-level race series aimed at showcasing new riders, all 'A' graders, international riders and pro level racers are not eligible to win any prizes – although they are welcome to race in the series.



Individual round payments will be awarded on a race-by-race basis but to be in the running for the overall contingencies, racers are asked to compete in at least four of the five rounds.

All riders must display all series logos and run a Yamaha Racing patch on leathers in order to benefit from the prize pool payments.

ASBK tests take place for R3 Cup Competitors on the following dates: Wakefield Park 7-8 March, Winton 11-12 April and Morgan Park 9-10 August 2017. ■

R3 CUP DATES

1	Wakefield Park Raceway, Goulburn NSW	17-19 March
2	Winton Motor Raceway, Benalla VIC	28-30 April
3	Morgan Park Raceway, Warwick Qld	25-27 August
4	SMSP, Eastern Creek NSW	8-10 September
5	Phillip Island Prix Circuit, VIC	6-8 October

BMW Dealer of the Year Award Winners

Southbank Motorcycles Melbourne and Westco Motors BMW Cairns have taken out the BMW Dealer of the Year Awards for 2016.

The accolade is awarded to the metropolitan and regional BMW Motorrad dealership which excels in all areas of operation, with the ultimate focus on the customer.

Southbank Motorcycles Dealer Principal, Manny Nenos, was excited to receive the award, saying "we are extremely thrilled to have been recognised for our hard work and dedication to the BMW Motorrad brand in 2016 with the prestigious Dealer of the Year Trophy.

"These awards are extremely difficult to achieve, I am really proud of the team and grateful to our loyal customers. Thank you all those involved in achieving this result."

Westco Motors BMW won the award for the second year in a row, Dealer Principal Chris King said "the continued success of Westco Motors BMW Motorrad rides on the back of our long-standing relationships with a loyal customer base.

"That, coupled with the ultimate riding machines, a second-to-none Far-North lifestyle and some of the best places to ride, is a sure-fire formula for success." ■



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FOR THE RIDE



SWANN SUPER SERIES

Across three rounds in New South Wales and Queensland and nationally televised, the 2017 Swann Super Series is looking to put on a great show for spectators and be hugely popular with riders this year.

With feedback from competitors, the series is a compact three-event six-round championship spread across Autumn, Winter and Spring.

"This new compact series calendar and many other changes for this year will provide for the majority of competitors, whether they be A, B C or D graders, the most cost effective and affordable high profile televised championship series with the least amount of travel and time off of work to compete in while still providing the most track time and number of races per weekend," said Terry O'Neill, the series promoter.

The first rounds of the revamped SWANN SUPER SERIES kicks off at Sydney Motorsport Park (Eastern Creek) over the weekend of 7-9 April and it's the only modern road racing at the track until September.

There are several new classes including 400 Supersport for Ninja 300s, R3s, KTM 390s etc. Also new is SuperTwins 700 which is aimed squarely at Suzuki SV650s, Kawasaki and Hyosung 650s and MT07s etc, along with the other ongoing popular series classes including the 'race what you bring' Formula Oz class, Superbike, Supersport, AM-Sport 600 and Pro-Twins / Nakedbikes. Please also check

KTM's contingency prizes

KTM has come on board with the Swann Super Series, offering a KTM RC390 to the top-placed KTM rider in the series, valued at \$6995.

On top of that if a KTM RC390-mounted rider win's the Championship outright the winning competitor will receive an additional \$2,000 entry fee voucher to the 2018 Series. The prizes extend further to KTM riders who do well outright in the 2017 400 SuperSport Championship on the KTM RC390, if a KTM rider finishes second outright they will receive a \$1,500 series entry fee voucher and if they finish third outright a \$1,000 entry fee voucher for 2018.

KTM's Jeff Leisk commented "In-line with KTM's global strategy to support and encourage the future generation of road racers we are delighted to offer a brand new KTM RC390 to the top placed KTM rider in the Swann Super Series. The KTM RC 390 is the perfect bike to start your racing career on, unmatched performance and handling that confirms KTM's Ready to Race philosophy." ■

out the changes for Formula Oz and Nakedbike which will see both classes grow.

The series still retains six separately point scored rounds that will for 2017 be spread over three major weekend events with each event being separately point scored double-header rounds. ■

2017 SWANN SUPER SERIES CALENDAR:

Rounds 1 & 2	7th -9th April	Sydney Motorsport Park NSW
Rounds 3 & 4	14th – 16th July	Queensland Raceway Qld
Rounds 5 & 6	3rd – 5th November	Sydney Motorsport Park NSW

There will once again be a subsidised travel package for NSW riders to get their bikes and gear up to the Queensland round. For further details regarding the SWANN SUPER SERIES please contact Terry O'Neill at ARTRP on 02 49812315 within business hours or email at toneill@aus-superbikes.com.au



Triumph announces three new Street Triples

With a pair of 765cc high-performance middleweights and a 660cc LAMS version, Triumph is getting very serious about the naked performance.

The top-of-the-range Street Triple RS has the Cycle Torque crew drooling somewhat. We're keen to test out the 121 horses, Öhlins fully-adjustable rear shock, Brembo M50 monoblocs, fully-adjustable Showa big piston forks, quickshifter, lap timer, bar-end mirrors and five riding modes (Track, Sport, Road, Rain, Rider).

In addition to all that- the RS has all the good bits on the street Triple R: switchable ABS and traction control, slipper clutch, five-inch colour TFT instruments with high-spec onboard computer and five-way joystick control, daytime running light and self-cancelling indicators and more.

The new Street engine has been developed from the race-oriented Daytona, with over 80 new parts.

The Street Triple R is slightly detuned, putting out a claimed 116 horsepower at 12,000 revs, receiving Brembo monoblocs, fully-adjustable Showa suspension at both ends and four rider modes (Sport, Road, Rain, Rider).

It appears the Street Triple S will be sleeved for its capacity to align with Australia's LAMS laws, coming in at 660cc.

Since the first Street Triple was launched back in 2007 the naked middleweight class has really exploded, showing the world there's plenty of demand for good looking middleweight machines with plenty of style and performance.

Each bike will be available in two colours: Street Triple S - Diablo Red or Phantom Black (Metallic)

Street Triple R - Jet Black (Gloss), Matt Aluminium Silver or Crystal White

Street Triple RS - Matt Silver Ice or Phantom Black (Metallic). ■



Kawasaki partners with Champion's

Champion's Ride Days has announced a partnership with Kawasaki Motors Australia, which will provide a range of Kawasaki bikes for hire during their trackday events.

Champion's Ride Days is also set to host a number of Kawasaki Team Green Australia Track Ride Day events in 2017.

Broadford Raceway and Queensland Raceway simultaneously played host to the inaugural events in January, and participants enjoyed the excitement of the new alliance.

Nicole Osbourne, spokesperson for Champion's Ride Days said "we had a great day and the response to being partnered with Kawasaki from our customers was really exciting."

"It was fabulous to have a fresh new look and feel, with many riders sitting on the bikes and 'touching and feeling' them all. "Of course everyone was volunteering to run them in too."

"We spoke at the beginning of the riders-briefing about our commitment to being the most professional, safe and fun ride



day company, offering the biggest range of hire motorcycles to all types of riders – beginners or advanced, adrenalin junkies or café racers.

"Also about our excitement about the new partnership and Kawasaki's passion for being on track.

"It was really well received with lots of cheers!" commented Nicole.

To find out more about upcoming Champion's Ride Days events, including Kawasaki hire, visit championsridedays.com.au OR call them on (07) 3287 4144. ■

U-TURN

Naked bikes are awful

It's time to face-up to reality. Naked bikes are uncomfortable, tiring, ugly and ridiculous.

They truly are awful.

I mean, what is there to like about sitting out in the freezing cold, or insufferable heat, getting buffeted around in the breeze like you're under the spell of a Pinball Wizard?

Hop on the freeway and you'll feel like you're going to get blown off the back, unless you've got a set of clip-on handlebars and think you some-sort of café racer type.

Which is fine until the speedo needle drops below 120, because then the weight goes back on those wrists and you decide to take the long way home, not via the Old Road... By the way of your friendly physiotherapist.

Naked bikes sure do come in all shapes and sizes – from Harleys and Triumphs and Indians which look like they were made in the 1950s to the modern machines from Asia which look like they should be in a science-fiction movie rather than your garage.

They expect us to buy this junk?

Nope, get something with a fairing. A decent fairing too, not a 'fly screen'. What, you don't want flies hanging around your bike? No? Well don't put a bloody fly screen on it. Put a Windjammer on it. Something which makes your bike punch through the air, something to stop the driving rain punching through you during a thunderstorm.

Yeah, I know adding a big fairing to your naked bike won't make it handle better, throwing heaps of weight at a bike never does. But doesn't it look cool, having a machine which looks like it came off the set of Mad Max?

Alright, so maybe you don't need a massive fairing – but face it, you need something. Aerodynamics are important, you know...

Just make sure it has a tinted screen. Clear screens, well, they aren't cool. You never look through them anyway, they distort the view.

You do have to choose between handlebar and frame-mounted fairings. Handlebar jobs add weight straight to the front-end but they are usually lighter, smaller and cheaper than frame-mounted fairings. Not as protective though, and that's the important thing. Protection. Hell, we live in Australia where we must be protected from anything even remotely dangerous.

I'm surprised the politicians haven't banned the snake, they've tried to ban everything else which makes your heart race. Which pretty-well includes sportsbikes, because riding fast on the road these days might be safer than ever but it sure is dangerous to your licence. Get up to a speed where your aerodynamic fairing is actually working the way it was designed and you will be at or beyond arrest-able speeds.

What you want is to be able to have fun at a lower speed. You want to be comfortable without having to do a million miles an hour. You want the breeze to help, so get rid of that massive, mostly-useless fairing.

What ever possessed you to fit that? When are you going to ride in a thunderstorm?

That bolted-on crap is going to give your bike headshakes. Get rid of it.

Don't you know why there are so many naked bikes on the market? You know, good looking machines which handle, stop, go fast and look good? You can choose from a huge variety of classic styles or modern designs from Europe, America, Japan and Asia.

Naked bikes are the go I tell you – versatile, fun, inexpensive. Everyone should have one.

– Norman Cotton

Hogs for the Homeless rides again

Harley-Davidson ambassador Nathan Hindmarsh will join fellow NSW Blues legends Brad Fittler, Steve Menzies and Danny Buderus in a 20-strong convoy riding Harley-Davidson motorcycles over 4,000km in 11 days to raise awareness and funds for Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Streets.

The ride kicks off today, February 17 from Fraser Motorcycles Concord, with the boys making 14 stops, travelling to Bathurst, Orange, Wagga Wagga, Tumut, Jindabyne, Canberra, Dubbo, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and more.

The Origin greats will set up rugby league clinics, attend local league tournaments including three all-girl nines tournaments, and give away 3,000 footballs to girls and boys.

The team has also committed to help the town of Walgett re-turf an entire Rugby League pitch, with almost \$150,000 in materials and labour being donated.

Adam Wright, spokesperson for Harley-Davidson Australia and New Zealand said "we are extremely proud to continue our commitment to The Hogs For The Homeless tour.

"Working alongside some of the biggest names in Rugby League, we have recognised what can be achieved by coming together, and the impact that we have already received over the past five years.

"It is a rewarding program for our dealers and all those involved."



Members of the public can support Youth off the Streets by purchasing raffle tickets, with proceeds going directly to Father Riley's worth charity.

H-D has provided number of raffle prizes including a Harley Davidson XL1200 CX Roadster (value \$19,495), a State of Origin experience for four people at Game Two on Wednesday, 21 June, 2017 (value \$6,000), and a signed 2017 VB Blues Jumper.

Since its inception in 2013, Hogs For The Homeless has engaged with local communities across NSW to promote and raise awareness of youth homelessness throughout Australia.

Harley-Davidson has also provided each member of the twenty all-star line up a Harley-Davidson motorcycle for the journey.

To date, Hogs For The Homeless has raised more than \$450,000 for Youth Off The Streets, the charity supporting young people who are homeless, drug dependent and recovering from abuse. ■



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Pat Bowden celebrates Night of the Jump FMX podium

FMX Team City Coast Motorcycles Pat Bowden achieved his first FIM Freestyle Motocross World Championship podium at Night of the Jumps in Basel, Switzerland.

The Aussie wowed the crowds with tricks like his Ruler Flip, Seat Grab Indy Flip over the Super Kicker, Cliffhanger 1-Hand Lander, Ruler, 1-Hand Can Flip, Under Flip, Suicide Flip, Clicker to Indy Flip and Double Grab Backflip.

We're worn out just reading the trick names!

The judges honoured his run and variety with 375 points, that put him in 3rd position.

"[It's] such an amazing feeling last night after dreaming of this for years.

"I got to experience the feeling of standing on the Night of the Jump's podium after giving it everything I had," Bowden said.

The 23 year-old Brisbane-based rider went on to win the Best Whip competition at Night of the Jumps in Berlin the following weekend. ■

Born to Ride

I've just finished reading Bruce Springsteen's much-awaited autobiography 'Born to Run'. He opens with his complicated upbringing in Freehold, New Jersey then how he fell in love with music after seeing Elvis and later the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show. He later talks about his battles with depression, the mental illnesses that have plagued his family, and a bit about motorbikes.

Springsteen's breakout 1975 album Born to Run resonated around the world. Souped-up American cars feature prominently in the great escape that the title track promised, where 'Hemi-powered drones' and 'last-chance power drives' provide the soundtrack to Springsteen's New Jersey. The reality was that Bruce hitched everywhere and didn't drive or even have a car licence until well into his 20s. What he did have, when he was 17, was a small-capacity Yamaha.

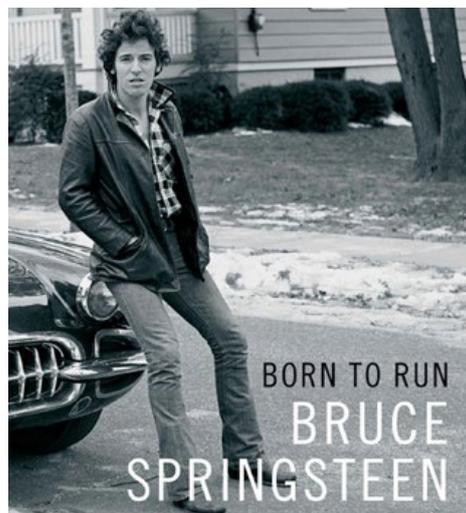
In 1967, a helmetless Springer was T-boned by a '63 Caddy, sending him 20-feet in the air, smashing his leg and knocking him out for 20 minutes. Sporting very long hair as lead guitarist of the Castilles, Springsteen said doctors

refused to treat his serious head wound because of his long locks, which his dad had lopped off by a barber who came to the Springsteen home. "That was the last straw," Springsteen wrote. "I screamed and swore at him. It was the only time I told my dad I hated - HATED - him."

While his various cars are mentioned in the book, his motorcycles don't get as much ink. It's clear, though, that bikes and the people who ride them continue to be a very big part of the Springsteen's life. And here's the thing. Bruce has formed extremely close bonds with all the musicians he has played with, from the Castilles to the E Street Band.

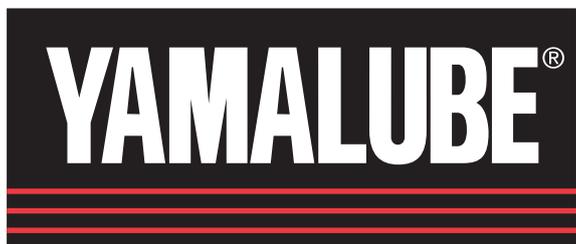
To Bruce, music is his lifeblood, and the people he performs it with share a mystical connection that has carried his music and words to millions of people around the world. He ruminates on the deep spiritual and creative chasms he has negotiated, and reveals his secrets to conjuring sounds from musicians that share his "feel". They should be his brothers, but they are not.

After the release of his 1982 album Nebraska, Springsteen bought a '69 Ford XL from a friend, Matt Delia, who



owned the last Triumph dealership in New Jersey with his brothers Tony and Ed. First introduced to the boys by E Street drummer Max Weinberg, Springsteen bought a late 60s Triumph Trophy from Matt, something clicked, and in Bruce's own words, "Matt, Tony and Ed became the brothers I never had." For a man who has lived for music and the people he plays with, that is a pretty big statement.

In the fall of 1989, Springsteen and Delia brothers went on a ride in the American southwest. "It was only ten days," Springsteen wrote, "but it would *Continued >*



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be a great ride, one of the great rides, and would begin on the cusp of earthquake-like changes that would be as profound and life altering as the day I first picked up the guitar." Springsteen spent a few pages describing the fascinating desert landscape and its unique inhabitants before he made it home tired but exultant. Several days after he returned to LA, Bruce's wife Patti told him she was pregnant with their first child, Evan James.

Fame, and dealing with the ongoing dilemma of being "a rich man in a poor man's shirt" and his depression have taken a toll on the 67-year-old. Bruce has spent decades untwisting it all with several therapists and medication. Sprinkled through the latter sections of book are mentions of Springsteen climbing aboard his bike, just to get away from it all and clear his head. It's a fair bet that rumbling along a back-road, anonymous and out of contact with

the real world is where Bruce finds true peace that only time in the saddle can bring, an escape we all understand and covet. The book closes with Springsteen riding his bike in New Jersey, soaking up the vibes to convey a positive end to his story thus far, and to provide a guide for our collective futures through adventure, escape and renewal. Tramps like us, baby we were Born to Ride.

– DARRYL FLACK

EDITORIAL

Seller's Remorse

On the rare occasion, we get feedback from people's experience in bike shops. Nine times out of 10, it's great. But every now and then it's pretty woeful. But is it the shop's fault or ours?

We recently received a phone call from a guy who shall remain nameless for obvious reasons. This man, a tradie, on his lunch-break had his eyes set on a serious piece of machinery. From the first time he laid his eyes upon its beauty, he just had to have it. The man told us about how he read up on all the info - drooling all-the-while. Everything reaffirmed his desires.

By the time he got home from work, he would have it all planned out. It was only one task, but it took all the courage he could muster. To simply ask the wife for her forgiveness. Permission would be a foolish endeavour as this man said he was no kamikaze pilot.

But alas, it wasn't to be.

For you see, this tradesman, in all of his high-vis' glory, did not buy the bike of his dreams. Instead - he walked around it in circles, waiting for the 'obvious' interaction that should happen between customer and sales staff...

Nothing happened. It left a sour taste in his mouth as if it had been filled with nine volt batteries. On the way out of the shop, he overheard a conversation the salesman was having with his comrade about the previous night's episode of Gogglebox. It was a meta-Orwellian nightmare.

He was pissed off to say the least, telling us he would never buy a bike from this shop. Ever. He reckons the tradesman's uniform must have meant the guys in the shop presumed him to be a tyre-kicker...

We don't necessarily agree with that although it's hard to tell what's going through the sales assistant's head. People wearing high-vis' can - and do - earn quite a lot of money.

Is it a case of the sales assistant being jaded from the 100 'tyre-kickers' before him? Who knows for sure.

There is also no rule forbidding the man from approaching the staff for assistance. His reasoning was fair: 'if it's like this out the front of the shop, what's it like out the back?'

Even so, as customers we can at times be guilty of going shopping without wanting to be bothered by anyone either, so it must be hard to figure out which mindset a potential customer is in. Who do you approach? How do you know they have been approached already? And how do you know someone wants to be left alone?

Getting it wrong can have disastrous outcomes, both for the customer and the store.

Take another example of an older couple who have never sat

their behinds upon a motorcycle, walking into a shop to buy a few tube scarves for their son. You know the ones... You can turn them into a bandanna, balaclava, headband, etcetera. They're great pieces of kit. Every shop sells them. Well, the shop assistant at this particular store had no idea what this pair were on about. The couple were subsequently embarrassed and sent packing, grabbing a copy of Cycle Torque on the way out... They didn't go to another shop, fearing they would go through it again, but they spoke to us instead. Was it a case of the couple not being able to effectively communicate the product they were after? Or was it a case of poor service?

The problem is this kind of feedback invariably does not get back to the person who is in a position to do something about it. Because they have no idea it is happening, the problem can't be fixed. Customers feeling burnt in this way prefer not to voice their disapproval or rant on social media... They take their money elsewhere. And never come back.

Occasionally it goes the other way. Way back in the day when there was a waiting list for every Softail in the Harley-Davidson range, nobody got a discount or free helmet with their bike.

So it was somewhat surprising when a young bloke trying on open-face helmets told an assistant who did approach him, "your boss said he'd throw one in with a new Heritage, so I'm just working out what size to get".

Turned out the boss had done the right thing, approached this young bloke on a previous visit and had said "Fine, no problem", when said young bloke asked for a helmet with the deal.

Turned out the boss thought he was a time-waster and believed any time spent on a negotiation would also be wasted, so he just offered to give him the helmet. So the shop lost \$100 on a helmet sale, but sold a bike and gained a new customer, because the owner put the time in despite the customer looking like he was a tyre-kicker.

These stories are few and far between and goes to show how hard running a shop must be. We reckon if you go to a shop and you want something, don't be afraid to ask. We also reckon that it's better to be approached when you don't want help, than not be approached when you do.

But what do you reckon? Have you had any good or bad experiences in a bike shop? How do you approach people if you work in a shop? Let us know.

– RYAN GRUBB

Back In My Day...

Don't you just hate it when some old dude starts prattling on about how good it was back in the good old days? Well, I have just realised that I am officially 'that' old dude!

After ten years in a completely different world I have returned to the motorcycle industry and I am now back to hanging out at motorcycle dealerships on a day-to-day basis. Obviously most of the staff (and even the customers in most cases) that I am interacting with are a fair bit younger than I so when it comes to sharing our motorcycle-related stories I have a larger bank of experience to draw from.

You see, my very first job was as a shit-kicker at Darryl Reek's Suzuki on the outskirts of Ipswich back in 1980 and since then I have worked in sales and management roles for some of the big-hitters in the industry. Since my return I can say without fear of contradiction that customer service and sales hasn't changed one iota in all these years but the way a motorcycle dealership is run and operated these days is quite a bit different from 20-plus years ago.

How so? I hear you ask. Well, throughout the 1980s and even the early 1990s, working in a motorcycle dealership was, for the want of a better word, loose! Each day was a fly by the seat of your pants gig and sure, we were all trying our best to make as many sales as possible but we also put a fair amount of energy into having fun.

Taking a customer on a test ride through the back streets near the dealership was for the

most part a time to pull long wheelies while the customer followed at a safe distance and showing a customer how an unregistered dirt bike went by firing it up a side alley or street was a dream come true for a knucklehead like me.

This was the norm for motorcycle dealerships during that era from what I understand because most of the customers didn't even raise an eyebrow when I came flying past them in a wheel stand on a bike that they were looking at buying and I can't ever remember a customer questioning the fact that the protective gear I had on at the time was less than desirable if by chance I took a spill (thankfully I was one of the few who never did crash while 'performing' for a customer).

We often had Sunday 'shop rides' where we invited customers to join us on a road or dirt bike ride and these events were more often than not a very loose affair with less experienced customers (and staff) having all sorts of troubles while trying to stay with or emulate the antics of some of the more accomplished riders and we never thought to slow down or offer some guidance before the ride started.

And if you think all of this was happening behind the owner or dealer principal's back you would be mistaken, in fact, on many occasions I was personally egged-on by my boss at the time to 'show 'em how to pull a decent wheelie Smarty'. Or once while standing with a group of people at the front of a dealership on a Saturday arvo the dealership owner said, 'how far do you reckon you

can wheelie that CBR1000F Smarty?' Needless to say, I showed him and the rest of people on hand how far a big fat sports-touring Honda can be wheelied.

That is just the tip of the iceberg and I have hundreds of stories relating to all sorts of shenanigans and as much as it sounds like a lot of fun these activities had to be put to a stop for the sake of the staff and customers alike. With all of the current Occupational Health and Safety regulations relating to the safe operation of everything from a golf buggy to a wheel-barrow, pulling a wheelie or speeding on a motorcycle while performing your duties for a motorcycle dealership will now cost you your job.

Thankfully, test rides are taken a lot more seriously and at a much steadier pace these days, as are most of the other activities around a motorcycle dealership with a much more professional approach to not only the stores presentation but also to the way accessories are displayed and with modern technology ordering parts and accessories is a much more streamlined operation than in the past.

Is it still fun working in a motorcycle dealership? You bet, it's just a different kind of thrill being around young, like-minded people who are happy to listen to and learn from an old guy like me who, after 36-plus years, still loves this industry.

– DARREN SMART



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BMW's more-capable 800

BMW has improved the electronics package and updated the F 800 GS Adventure – but is that enough in the more and more crowded adventure bike market?

★ TEST & PHOTOS BY NIGEL PATERSON



THE BMW F 800 GS Adventure has always been the little brother who could. It's smaller, not as brawny, but just as tough and capable as the more famous family member, the R 1200 GS Adventure.

While all the GS models are enjoying popularity among Australia's motorcyclists, it's the R 1200s which are rolling out of showrooms the most, and for good reasons – they are incredible machines, being highly capable, versatile, powerful and tough.

They are also expensive, heavy and bulky, which is why BMW also has the F 800 GS and F 800 GS Adventure in the range, and if you don't think that's important you're probably not a dirt bike rider.

The tighter the terrain, the lighter you want your bike. Riders who seek-out single-track trails running up and down mountains, through creeks and rivers, over rocky terrain and through mud know a lighter bike will be easier to handle, more likely to get through and even suffer less punctures than a heavier bike. You'll end up less fatigued and beaten-up at the end of a long day of riding, too.

It's the same at the heavy-end of off-road riding with twin-cylinder Adventure bikes. There are no truly lightweight Adventure twins, but backing up each day of the recent GS Safari (see the Jan/Feb issue) in the intense heat of a Queensland summer just felt that much easier than if I'd been riding the behemoth of the Adventure world, the R 1200 GS Adventure.

In comparison, the F 800 GS Adventure feels lithe. It's a physically smaller machine overall, but still plenty roomy enough for a 185cm rider. Narrower and shorter too, the F 800 GS is less intimidating and easier to ride than its big brothers.

2017 changes

For 2017 BMW has altered the electronics package of the small GS machines and altered the riding modes. There's Rain, Road, Enduro and Enduro Pro if you choose the right options (make sure you buy the optional Dynamic Package) and jump through the right hoops, but boy, is it worth it. But more on that later.

The Dynamic Package also adds ESA

(Electronic suspension Adjustment), ASC, (Automatic Stability Control, aka traction control).

There's an 'electromotive' throttle controller... which most of us would call ride-by-wire (so no throttle cable, just an electronic signal from the twist grip sensor to motorcycles engine control unit).

Along with the new modes and throttle there are new instruments.

The exhaust system has been updated, and BMW is offering an Akrapovi system for the bike, too. The new pipe is a result of updating the bike for Euro4 emission regulations, so you can feel that little bit greener when you ride one, too.

There's also galvanised radiator trim and integrated GS badges.

Two new colour schemes are available in 2017:

Racing Red, light white frame, white shock spring, red/black seat, tinted windshield; and Catalano Grey metallic paint, black frame, white spring, grey/black seat.

I thought there was a third colour, Mud Brown: paint, seat, frame, wheels and everything else, but I discovered later (with the aid of a pressure washer) it was

Continued >



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actually a red one until Adventure Rider's Tom Foster had been let-loose on the bike in the days before it was handed over to me. Some excuse about 'rain', 'mud', and 'just because'...

The powerplant

There's 63kW (85HP) available at 7500rpm and 83Nm at 5750rpm. The power is delivered in a surprisingly steep power curve, but there's more than 50kW from about 5700rpm, so it'll pull if you rev it. More importantly on a bike of this type is the 75Nm-plus being produced from 3500rpm – torque which will get you out of trouble, covers up your mistakes and makes the bike easy to ride fast.

It's all produced by a 798cc parallel twin. The 82mm bore and 75.6mm stroke make it only moderately over-square, which explains the low revs and high torque, by modern standards.

It's water-cooled, has four valves per cylinder, double overhead camshafts has a wet clutch and six-speed gearbox before driving the rear wheel with a chain.

Now, I love the R-series twins, but I like the wet clutch and chain drive of the 800s. The smaller twins have slicker shifting, freer-spinning motors and no side-to-side shake, making them feel far more conventional than the horizontally-opposed engines. Not better mind you, different, and you need to know that.

If you're seriously considering a BMW 800 you're not looking for the last word in performance, but you'll get a very capable machine. It's not the fastest, lightest or highest-performing adventure bike on the market, but it will hold its own on a decent ride.

Getting it dirty again...

The bulk of my riding on the 2017 800 was done on dirt roads: that's the nature of the GS Safari where the bike was launched, and I loved it (see the Jan/Feb 2017 issue for the story of the GS Safari).

If the bike's dimensions have changed I didn't notice it – throw a leg over the bike and it feels very much like the earlier model. There's still the excellent triple-row footpegs (which owners of standard GSs should fit, the double row pegs are awful), flip-down brake height adjuster, 24-litre fuel tank under the seat, crash bars & pannier rails and protective screen.

Upfront is a 21-inch front wheel. That's a serious off-road size and is something I really like to see on a bike designed to travel on dirt roads as much as bitumen. BMW had fitted Continental knobblies to the bike for the Safari (they are an option) which are a fantastic tyre, but boy do they wear out quick when the weather is hot and the riding spirited.

On the road the 21-inch tyre, especially with the knobby, really doesn't offer the performance or confidence of the fat 19-incher on the 1200cc models. Not that

the 800 is bad, it's really a case of the 1200s being amazing...

The seat height is excellent for beanpoles like me, although obviously those of shorter stature might not appreciate it being up there at 890mm. BMW offers a low suspension option of 860mm, and you'll have to make up your own mind about doing that – I reckon it might compromise the suspension performance somewhat, but I also suppose you'll have to stop and put your feet on the ground before too long.

The modes

The electronic wizardry integrates throttle position, engine speed, gear, ABS, ASC and more. The system uses information from all these systems to determine how hard the bike will accelerate, what the suspension is doing and lots more.

From the user's perspective, there are just a handful of choices to be made and the bike will do the rest.

"Rain" mode is designed for wet sealed surfaces and gives a very gentle throttle response while ABS and ASC will kick

in with little provocation – which is what most of us want in the wet. The launch was run in very hot and dry conditions – so the tyres barely got wet, so I'm unable to report on rain mode. But I'm sure it would be fine.

How BMW decide what is 'optimum' is a mystery, but that's the throttle response when the bike is set to "Road" mode. ABS and ASC are set up for dry street riding.

"Enduro" mode is designed for the standard road/trail tyres handling light off-road use. Throttle response is gentle, ABS and ASC configured not to cut in too soon. I thought I liked Enduro mode, right up until I tried Enduro Pro... If you have little experience on loose surfaces, Enduro mode is great.

Enduro Pro is the place to be. Designed for off-road rubber it features a snappier throttle, rear-wheel ABS deactivated, plus non-intrusive ASC. I loved this mode, for there's still a 'safety net' of front-wheel ABS and traction control, but it allows for more aggressive riding.

Experts can switch off ABS and ASC in any mode.

Continued >

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Serious adventure riders rarely use hard panniers anymore, they are too easy to break in a small tip-over – you're better off with soft bags. Luckily, the standard pannier frames make strapping on soft bags easy.

From experience I'd recommend a headlight protector and radiator guard, especially if you're touring with mates – you know, the people who delight in throwing large amounts of dust, water and the occasional rock at you when in the lead.

With the standard tall screen, wide pegs and big fuel tank, it really comes down to personal preference as to what other accessories and options you might want to choose.

The riding position works really well. On the road you're sitting up in the breeze a little, but the tall Adventure screen, steering geometry, 21-inch front wheel and knobby tyres all conspired to persuade me that high speeds needed be quite as illegal as I've sometimes ridden. Seat comfort is OK, too.

I did miss cruise control when riding the road sections, it's standard on so many bikes these days it's very noticeable when not available. Not a big deal on an Adventure bike – using cruise off road is a dumb idea – but nice to have for the blacktop in-between. Bet it's there on the next big update in a few years' time.

Suspension, brakes and stuff

It's got forks, a shock absorber, alloy swingarm and a trellis frame. All good. What, you want to know more? What for? It all works pretty well... The bike I rode was fitted with ESA, Electronic Suspension Adjustment, which performs its magic in the background, adjusting settings on the fly and trying to create a comfortable, confidence-inspiring and good handling ride.

I didn't fiddle with the suspension much at all on this launch, partly because I was busy riding but mostly because I didn't need to. Generally I'll adjust a bike's suspension until I like it and then leave it alone, but when circumstances change I'm out with the tools again – but not so much with ESA-equipped BMWs. The only manual adjustment is the rear preload – unlike the 1200s, this doesn't adjust automatically, but the damping rates at the rear does.

I had a couple of big moments on the GS Adventure which the suspension coped with admirably, despite doing my best to throw myself over the handlebars. While not in the league of top-shelf units, the suspension fitted to the 2017 F 800 GS

Continued >





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CYCLE TORQUE RIDE 2017 BMW F 800 GS ADVENTURE

SPECIFICATIONS:

2017 BMW F 800 GS ADVENTURE

- **ENGINE:** Liquid cooled in-line twin
- **CAPACITY:** 798cc
- **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed
- **DRIVE TYPE:** Chain drive
- **FUEL CAPACITY:** 24L
- **FRAME:** Tubular space
- **SEAT HEIGHT:** 890mm
- **WEIGHT:** 232kg Wet
- **FRONT SUSPENSION:** 43mm upside-down telescopic forks, electronic adjustment
- **REAR SUSPENSION:** WAD strut (travel-related damping), electronic compression and rebound, manual preload adjustment
- **BRAKES:** F: 2x 300mm floating discs with two-piston floating calipers; R: 265mm single-piston floating disc
- **TYRES:** F: 90/90-21; R: 150-70-17
- **PRICE:** \$18,650 - \$20,275 +ORC

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Adventures is well suited to the bike.

Much the same can be said about the brakes. The ABS-equipped triple disc set-up is what we've come to expect and it certainly works really well, although I occasionally wonder if a large Supermoto-style single disc would reduce unsprung weight without compromising stopping power... but it doesn't really matter what I think, I'm sure the BMW marketing team would have heart palpitations if the engineering crew suggested only one disc was required. A lighter front-end might have the GS A handling better over rocky terrain in particular.

Of course most Adventure bikes spend far more time on the bitumen than they do bouncing over rocky trails, and the twin-disc set-up provides excellent stopping power and fade resistance on the tar. The ABS system is tried and true and being able to disconnect the rear ABS to brake slide the rear in Enduro Pro mode is an overdue update.

Conclusion

I've been lucky enough to have been a bike journo since the launch of the R1100GS. That bike was impressive, but was a behemoth of a machine. The 1150s were much the same but with the 1200s BMW managed to shave of quite a bit of weight.

But the F 800s are so much lighter and more compact it's not funny. If I'm solo and on a loose surface, I'd rather be riding an 800 GS Adventure than any of the 1200s. Two-up and bitumen tends to alter my preferences a little, but in tough conditions the 800s are so much easier to handle and are so much fun to ride I simply love them.

Given the thousands of dollars you can save with an 800 over a 1200 I'm actually surprised more aren't sold, but then most riders never get the chance to really try out both in similar conditions. If you do get to ride an F 800 GS Adventure on a decent off-road trip, I think you'll be impressed. ■



Fun Sized

KTM has refined its mid-sized MXer to make it one of the best packages on the market...



★ TEST BY TODD REED, PHOTOS NIGEL PATERSON

What's new?

Let's be completely honest here. The 2017 KTM 350 SX-F isn't a whole lot different on the spec sheet when compared to the 2016 model. The engine is very much the same package with some electronics changes and KTM's new 'traction control' feature added. The chassis is almost identical to what we saw in 2016, with the only real difference being new engine support mounts. There are some changes to the Brembo brakes, with a less-aggressive style of brake pad and a longer rear brake pedal. KTM engineers re-worked the design of their CNC-machined triple clamps in conjunction with their new fork tubes, which really means they changed the design of the clamps to allow them to flex differently. The big news, as we just alluded to, is in the front suspension, with major changes in the way of a brand new set of forks, the WP AER fork, which is the latest in air suspension technology from the folks at WP Suspension. The WP AER system is a separate-function fork, with compressed air acting as a spring in the left side, while a more conventional oil and shims set-up doing the damping work in the right side fork. Air is adjustable through a valve on the top of the fork, which the WP air fork pump screws right onto. The pump is provided by KTM with the sale of every new bike and displays a nice digital face for all us tinkerers out there to play with. The other fork is similar to your average cartridge fork, but without the spring.

Of course, the WP rear shock gets some minor changes too with internal valving changes to match the new fork and chassis changes.

Lastly, bold new graphics and changes to the plastics colour scheme give the KTM a fresh new look. Gotta give the kids something to talk about, right?

Sure, the 'all-new' list ends here, but in our opinion that's a good thing. After all, don't forget that the 2016 model was 'all-new' too. You'd be a bit worried if after only 12 months KTM were having another go at the 350 SX-F.

Continued >



SPECIFICATIONS:

2017 KTM 350 SX-F

- **ENGINE:** Single-cylinder four-stroke
- **CAPACITY:** 350cc
- **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed
- **DRIVE TYPE:** Chain drive
- **FUEL CAPACITY:** 7L
- **FRAME:** Chromoly steel central-tube
- **SEAT HEIGHT:** 960mm
- **WEIGHT:** 105kg Wet
- **FRONT SUSPENSION:** WP AER4
- **REAR SUSPENSION:** WP monoshock with linkage
- **BRAKES:** F: 260mm disc; R: 220mm disc with Brembo caliper
- **TYRES:** Dunlop Geomax MX 3S
- **PRICE:** \$12,195



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2017 graphics are trick.



The 350cc engine is revvy and punchy.



Tasty WP suspension is at both ends.

Continued >

Electric!

The traction control system, and electronic upgrades going on with the 350 SX-F, and the rest of the KTM four-stroke MXers for that matter, are certainly pushing the boundaries of dirt bike technology. Wheel sensors are non-existent, as they are illegal in motocross racing. Instead the traction control system monitors RPM, throttle position, and many other engine behaviours to 'tune' the bike on the run. This system is fitted as standard equipment, and is activated by the rider by using a button on the handlebars.

Right next to the traction control button, is a mapping button. The mapping button, activates or deactivates a more aggressive style power curve. KTM has used this feature on and off over the years, with some models featuring it, and some not. It's nice to see it return on the 2017 model, as it's a feature that most riders will get a lot of use out of.

An hour meter has been fitted to the top triple clamp and sits in-front of the handlebars, it's not a very costly item, you can pick them up for under \$50, but it's great to see them come in standard from the factory. The little things KTM do really do make them ready to race...

While on the topic of electronics, KTM are still the only motocross bike to come standard with an electric starting system. The system has been on the KTM thumpers for a while now and has proved to be very effective and reliable. It's actually pretty crazy when you think about it, here we are talking about traction control and advanced electronics but yet all of the KTM's \$12,000 competitors, except Husqvarna, come with a clunky old kick-starter. You know who makes Husqvarnas right?

On the track

The 350cc engine concept may seem a bit odd to some, but to those who have ridden it, it makes perfect sense. Take a bit of punch away from the 450, and make it rev almost as far as a 250F. It's very potent recipe that is so much fun to ride on your average motocross track. The engine lights up quickly, with it's fast, free-revving style that responds quickly to a bit of clutch and a whisky right hand. It's not super strong in any one area, but if you can keep the revs up in the mid- to upper-areas, you will be rewarded and there's no chance you'll be wiping the smile off your face...

The traction control system works



surprisingly well in slippery conditions. On day-one of our test, we were greeted by a very dry and dusty motocross track. With the traction control on, it felt like we still had full power but at the point where you would normally have the bike launch into wheelspin or step out sideways on the exit of a corner, the KTM traction system kicked in just enough to calm the party down and keep things moving forwards. The mapping system, like the traction system works very well as the aggressive mode certainly packs a bit more punch. We still preferred the standard mode in the conditions we rode, as we felt like it offered better overall power around the whole track.

Now the part all the KTM die-hards have been waiting to hear about. The new WP AER front suspension. KTM set 10.6-bar of pressure in the left fork, which is the showroom-floor setting. Our two test riders are around the 80kg mark, and after only a few laps both found the KTM to be a bit stiff on initial feel. After talking to the KTM Australia technicians, they were quick to tell us that at our size and speed, setting it between 9.2 and 9.6 bar should be right on the money. We also backed the rear shock sag off to around 105mm and softened the rear clickers up a bit and we would be fine.

Once adjusted, the AER fork was much better, and it gave the 350 a very consistent feel throughout the day. The performance of the forks was quite good,

with it being precise and predictable all day long during our two test days. The air pressure stayed very consistent and we never had to adjust the pressure due to loss or heat. Eventually we were happiest with 9.6-bar in the front fork and felt like this is a set up we could be very confident with. The rear shock worked well and complimented the new forks, with no harshness and great stability at speed.

The overall handling of the 350 SX-F is great, as you would expect the lighter weight and lower rotating mass of the 350 make the bike easier to steer around the track, allowing you to be more precise and not become as worn out doing so.

Conclusion

It's no secret we are big fans of the KTM 350 SX-F, and the 2017 model is a huge improvement over what we've ridden in years past. The WP AER front fork makes the world of difference when it comes to comfort and handling, and as mentioned above we would rate it the best production air fork we've ridden to date. The engine is so much fun to ride, it can be ridden easily right throughout the rev range by riders of all skill levels. It doesn't pack the punch of a 450 on the open fast tracks, but for most of us mortals it's less taxing and is easier to ride when the track starts to get a bit beat up. ■



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110-INCH FAT BOY

Can an engine update save the much-loved
but aging Fat Boy?

★ TEST BY NIGEL PATERSON, PHOTOS RYAN GRUBB

★ NIGEL WEARS RXT HELMET, HARLEY-DAVIDSON JACKET, DRAGGIN JEANS AND MOTODRY BOOTS





IN A world which is forever demanding New New New, the Harley-Davidson Fat Boy is an aberration.

It's been with us since 1990, when the first (now highly-collectable) silver-with-yellow highlights model arrived with the Evolution motor and a name which just happened to evoke nuclear bombs.

Harley has always claimed it's a coincidence the Fat Man and Little Boy nuclear bombs have similar names to its now iconic Softail cruiser, but I'm not sure anyone believes them. After all, by 1989 Harley-Davidson was back in the black, helped by a short period of tariff protection in its home market combined with better quality control and bikes better suiting what the market wanted.

The conspiracy theorists have a field-day talking about how the first model is painted a similar colour to the Enola

Gay, the bomber which dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan, how the original tank emblem looks like the US Air Force's logo... but it really doesn't matter.

Harley was back, and riders sure wanted the Fat Boy, and it sold in droves. Getting one required months on a waiting list, something that would persist for years.

Is the Fat Boy still relevant?

The Fat Boy is nowhere near as popular as it once was. The Breakout, with its drag-race inspired 'bars, super-fat rear tyre and muscular stance is outselling the Fat Boy by a huge margin, and the Street 500 – aimed at riders younger than the Fat Boy's model run – outsells the Breakout.

So has Harley been able to do enough to keep the Fat Boy relevant?

The S-model

When Harley adds an 'S' to a model, it's more than just a styling exercise – indeed, with the Fat Boy there are few obvious changes to the untrained eye.

Of course park a new Fat Boy S next to an earlier model and the differences become more noticeable, but it's also obvious Harley-Davidson's designers wanted to keep the silhouette, which is the essence of the Fat Boy, unchanged.

There are still solid disc wheels, albeit lined with a ring of 'bullet' holes, the wide, low handlebars, King/Queen seat, fat chopped guards, forward-set floorboard controls and a style which seems ageless.

Fat Boys have been sold in many colours over the years, but the Fat Boy S is a blacked-out model – any colour you like, as long as it's black. But there's

Continued >



Vivid Black (gloss) and Black Denim (matt), so you don't actually get out of choosing.

Throw a leg over the Fat Boy S and it really doesn't feel much different to the earlier models. Pull it up off the sidestand and you'll remember why Harley-Davidson described itself as a manufacturer of heavyweight motorcycles.

Fire up the powerplant and you'll feel the shake shake shake of the V-twin at idle.

Drop it into gear and you'll be rewarded with a clunk which will register on a local seismometer.

Give it some revs and let out the clutch and it'll accelerate like no standard Fat Boy before it.

110 cubes, baby!

Harley has breathed extra performance into the Fat Boy S by slotting in its 110 cubic-inch Screamin' Eagle engine. Together with the Softail Slim S and Low Rider S, it's the first time we've seen this motor used outside of a CVO (Custom Vehicle Operations) machine, and that's a good thing, because CVOs are expensive and the Fat Boy S isn't – well, not by CVO standards, anyway. But more on the price and value later.

It is still an air-cooled 45-degree two-valve motor, but the extra capacity and better breathing (through a Screamin' Eagle air filter) in particular help the Fat Boy S develop massive torque from right down low in the rev range, so the bike rockets away from traffic lights like no Fat Boy before it.

No, that doesn't mean it's going to outrun a lightweight sportsbike, although it might if the sportsbike has a passenger – then they can be difficult to get off the line, where the Fat Boy S is easy, because the wide spread of power makes getting the clutch out a breeze (although holding in the heavy clutch isn't for wimps).

The shakes mostly disappear when you're rolling, the counter-balanced motor only passing through a beat to remind you there's an engine between your legs bigger than the one in your first love's car.

110ci is 1801cc, which is a seriously big motorcycle engine, and it produces prodigious amounts of torque – 146Nm at 4000 revs according to the specifications

Continued >



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SPECIFICATIONS:

2017 HARLEY-DAVIDSON FAT BOY S

- **ENGINE:** Air-cooled V-twin with fuel-injection
- **CAPACITY:** 1802cc
- **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed
- **DRIVE TYPE:** Belt
- **FUEL CAPACITY:** 18.9L
- **FRAME:** Steel double cradle
- **SEAT HEIGHT:** 670mm
- **WEIGHT:** 333kg Wet
- **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Conventional forks
- **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin underslung shocks
- **BRAKES:** F: 2x 300mm floating discs with two-piston floating calipers; R: 265mm single-piston floating disc
- **TYRES:** F: 140-75R17; R: 200/55-R17
- **PRICE:** \$31,750 plus on-roads

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chart. Surprisingly that's only an extra 10Nm of torque compared to the other Fat Boys in the range, and it's produced at 4000rpm rather than 3000.

The Motor Company doesn't quote horsepower figures, because they aren't high or relevant.

Ride one and you'll understand, this bike isn't about horsepower, but that doesn't make it slow.

The ride

It doesn't get much publicity, but Harley-Davidson has been gradually refining the frame, suspension and running gear on the Fat Boy since its introduction, and this is the best-handling one so far.

With its long, low profile, heavy, fat wheels and short-travel suspension it's never going to set lap records, but it certainly doesn't



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CVO donk is standard fare.



The Fat Boy's disc wheels are pretty unique.



Classic King/Queen saddle.

CYCLE TORQUE TEST 2017 HARLEY-DAVIDSON FAT BOY S





wallow around or twist and shimmy like some of the old ones.

The early models had pair of 16-inch wheels but they grew some years back to 17s without compromising the style of the bike.

The rear tyre is currently a 200-section, so it's fat and good looking.

In fact the chassis and suspension are now so predictable the problem is now cornering clearance – not that any Fat Boy has really had any now or in the past, but the better handling means the limits of clearance will be explored more, and I found myself scraping the boards all the time on the Fat Boy.

Sure the 140-section front tyre makes the steering a bit slow, but the Fat Boy S rolls into corners nicely.

My usual response to people complaining about cornering clearance on cruisers is 'you're riding the wrong bike for you', because cruisers are not designed for aggressive cornering – but the issue with the Fat Boy S is it's actually good fun through twisty bends, and I kept running out of cornering clearance without taxing the frame or suspension.

The brakes, however, are another matter.

Harley-Davidson compromises a lot for the sake of style. Its bikes could be a lot lighter, cheaper and faster if it were willing to use different metals, manufacturing processes and components... but then they wouldn't be Harleys.

So it's no surprise to me at all the Fat Boy still only has one front disc brake (indeed, the first Softail to get a twin-disc front end was the 2016 CVO Breakout). Unfortunately, despite being a four-piston caliper, it's a weak point in the Fat Boy S, the extra performance of the engine highlighting the moderate stopping power of the brakes.

The huge contact patch of the fat tyres and little front-end dive mean you can get quite a bit of stopping performance from the rear brake, and you need it to help out the front sometimes.

Hidden away is Harley's Anti Lock Braking System, there if you need it but not advertised in any way.

On the road

At moderate speeds motorcycles you'd have to buy a touring bike to be more comfortable, but if the weather's hot I'd rather ride the Fat Boy S.

The low seat is nicely padded and

comfortable, although it locks you into one spot because of its shape. There's a bit of a reach forward to the wide 'bars but the floorboards are just where you expect them.

It's a comfortable ride up to highway speeds, where I started to feel like a windsock with my arms spread out and sitting bolt upright.

But if that's a problem Harley offers a range of touring machines, or you could just buy a screen for the Fat Boy from Harley's extensive accessory catalogue.

The gearbox is a clunky six-speeder, but I never missed a shift. The clutch is heavy, the 'bars are fat and there's belt final drive, just as you'd expect.

The extra performance of the 'S' translates to a nicer highway ride, too, with better overtaking performance and nicer cruising. Engage the standard cruise control and relax...

The electronics

Harley-Davidson does an incredible job of supplying modern electronics with its bike, but doesn't make a song and dance about it.

I've already mentioned how the bike has ABS and cruise control, and nearly all Harleys have been fuel injected for years.

Continued >

The instruments look like something out of the 1950s, a big central speedo dial. But hidden inside are numerous warning lights, almost invisible unless lit up and a small LCD panel. The instruments can display odometer, time-of-day clock on odometer, dual tripmeter, RPM/gear display, fuel gauge with low fuel warning light and countdown feature, low oil pressure indicator light, engine diagnostics readout, LED indicator lights and 6-speed indicator light.

Pricing & value

The extra grunt of the 110ci engine for the S-model adds \$2500 to the price of the standard Fat Boy (\$29,250), while the Fat Boy Lo is definitely the bargain of the trio, starting at \$28,995.

So a Fat Boy S will cost you \$31,750 plus on-road costs and any extras you like from the Harley-Davidson accessory catalogue.

Is it worth it? I think so, but of course it comes down to your perspective. I like the extra grunt and free-revving engine, but I also like having the cruise control, and that's only standard on the S.

Of course it's impossible to say any Fat Boy is good value with a straight face unless you also start to wax lyrical about how the bike feels, about how it caresses the soul while rolling you down the road, how the value is in the years of ownership... basically if you like the Fat Boy the price is unlikely to shock you and if you can't understand why someone would spend over \$30,000 for a naked cruiser when you can buy a perfectly functional Japanese machine for less than half the price... if that's the case none of the Fat Boy models are for you.

Conclusion

Introducing the Fat Boy S has bounced the model back into the top ten cruisers for Australia, so not only is the machine a good bike, it's also resonating with the market.

The updates have held a fine line between not wanting to destroy what made the Fat Boy popular, but making sure the new model offered something for owners looking to trade up and enticing riders who had never owned a Fat Boy before to try one out.

It's a bit of a shame the Fat Boy S is only available in two different tones of black, but that might change in the future – and it looks like the future of the Fat Boy will be guaranteed for a while yet. ■





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Let out your inner hoon

Yamaha has built a naked which puts a smile on your dial every time you ride it...

★ REPORT BY NIGEL PATERSON, PHOTOS IKAPTURE

★ NIGEL WEARS KABUTO HELMET, SPIDI JACKET, FIVE GLOVES, DRAGGIN JEANS AND XPD BOOTS.



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Got the point yet? Yep, Yamaha's 2017 MT-09 is the bike for the hoon in us all. The bike to get you to work with the biggest smile, to go blasting up your local backroads, to simply enjoy, without the compromised riding position and stiff suspension of a sportsbike, without the lazy steering and wallow of a cruiser, without the wallet-emptying experience of a Euro bike.

While the Yamaha MT-09 has always been a good thing for hooning, the latest example has been updated to also make it a sensible ride for those looking for more of an all-rounder.

Price price PRICE!

\$12,299. Well, \$12,299 in Australia. That's without on-road costs which vary from state to state, but most of us should be able to ride one away from a dealer, insured for under

\$14,000 – incredible value. Hell, that's what you'd pay for many a secondhand bike, and if you buy new you get to choose the colour and run it in...

Too cheap to be perfect

Even the most expensive bikes aren't perfect, and the MT-09 is no exception. Early models were criticised for their extra-snappy throttles, inadequate front suspension and a dearth of electronic wizardry, but for 2017 Yamaha has addressed many of the problems.

Now we have multiple throttle modes, so while the extra-snappy throttle response is still there for those who want it – A mode – Standard mode and the tamer B mode are also there when you're not trying to do stunts. Most people, most of the time, will leave it in Standard mode.

Traction control (Off, plus levels 1 and 2) is there, while ABS is there too.

What it doesn't have are the extras you end up paying thousands for – no cruise control, electronic suspension, heated grips, fairing, centrestand or cup holders... this is a basic 21st-century motorcycle.

Continued >



Updates for 2017

There's a long list of changes for this model.

In no particular order, there's now a pair of LED headlights which combine with the styling changes at the back to really make the MT-09 look more like the patriarch of the family, the MT-10. The back-end is 30mm shorter and features a new tail-light.

The numberplate is attached to an arm which comes off the swingarm. Single-sided and chunky, opinions were polarised but I didn't like the look of it and I'll hazard a guess there's a fair bit of unsprung weight there, too.

Luckily there's an accessory optional fender eliminator-style numberplate holder which is more conventional.

The front-end still looks incomplete unless the optional fly screen is fitted. The instruments are integrated into the headlight better. Talking of lights, the front indicators have been moved down to near the radiator, which itself has larger intakes and new side fins.

The seat is slightly thicker and is fine for relatively short rides, although ride an MT-09 all-day and you'll be wanting the accessory comfort seat.

But the exciting bits are the assist and slipper clutch and quickshifter...

Flat changes...

It wasn't long ago I thought quickshifter on roadsters was a bit silly. I mean, unless you're chasing laptimes, what's the big deal about feathering the throttle and flicking the lever up? But I now realise I was being a bit of a dinosaur, quickshifters are here to stay and do make sportriding that little bit better.

Like most quickshifters, you only use the MT-09's on upshifts – simply pull the lever up (don't pull in the clutch) and keep the throttle in the same spot. The electronics cut power, thus engine load and the gearbox can change to a higher cog in a tiny fraction of a second.

Learn to ride like this and I reckon going back will be an issue.

Slipper clutches are a bit different, absolving rear-wheel lock-up when you get too aggressive with downshifts, usually going into turns. Many people will never engage the slipper part of their clutch because they will balance revs to road speed well, but when you get lazy, tired or aggressive a slipper clutch is fabulous.

The assist part of the name comes from the design, which reduces the tension on the springs when the clutch lever is pulled in, reducing the effort.

Continued >



SPECIFICATIONS:

2017 YAMAHA MT-09

■ **ENGINE:** Liquid-cooled in-line triple

■ **CAPACITY:** 847cc

■ **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed

■ **DRIVE TYPE:** Chain drive

■ **FUEL CAPACITY:** 14L

■ **FRAME:** Diamond

■ **SEAT HEIGHT:** 820mm

■ **WEIGHT:** 193kg Wet

■ **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic forks, 137mm travel

■ **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swingarm, 130mm travel

■ **BRAKES:** F: two 298mm hydraulic dual discs with radially-mounted calipers and ABS;
R: 245mm single hydraulic single disc with ABS

■ **TYRES:** F: 120/70 ZR-17; R: 180/55 ZR-17

■ **PRICE:** \$12,299 plus on-roads

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On the road

The MT-09 is a roadster at heart, a bloody good one at that.

In town the steering is light, precise and direct. The riding position is close to perfect, being upright enough to see over many cars, to make it easy to turn your head left and right. There's a slight lean forward to the handlebars and the footpegs are just a tiny bit rearset from a traditional roadster.

But it would be pretty easy to turn the MT-09 into a café racer, just fit the optional rearset footpegs and some low 'bars...

The inline triple spins up easily, the inherent low vibes of an inline triple providing a smooth ride until you really get into sports riding territory as the revs approach five figures.

The tachometer is a set of LED bars running left to right along the top of the monochrome LCD dash. I hated it, but the funny thing was I didn't need it – the flexible Massive Torque engine is easy to ride without worrying too much about the revs – it pulls hard across the rev range and doesn't become unrideable if a gear selection isn't perfect.

The MT-09 is easy to ride fast, but it's not as fast as a sportsbike. A good rider on a sportsbike – R6, R1, that sort of thing – will be quicker than the same rider on an MT-09. Usually... If the road is decent... If their suspension is set-up correctly...

But if you're not someone with track experience, someone who doesn't scrape their pegs regularly or views the speeds

on corners has a challenge to be doubled, the MT-09 is likely to prove plenty fast enough.

What I didn't like

The 14-litre tank, the thin seat, the complete lack of weather protection, the poor pillion accommodation and the lack of luggage capability.

That said Yamaha offers a tank bag and Comfort Seat for the MT-09 and if weather protection, pillion capability and luggage are real issues for you, buy the MT-09 Tracer.

Who's it for?

The commuter, weekend rider and hoon in all of us. ■





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Kawasaki has updated its 650 learners in 2017
- reducing weight and refining the engine to make
a pair of cracker Kwackers.

★ REPORT BY RYAN GRUBB, PHOTOS NICK WOOD

★ RYAN WEARS KABUTO HELMET, MOTODRY JACKET, FIVE GLOVES, DRAGGIN JEANS AND FALCO SNEAKERS.



The Z650L

When I heard the ER-6nL was getting replaced with the Z650L for MY17 my mind began to wander... A ZX-6R-based in-line four-cylinder streetfighter with four-into-one-into-four pipes sweeping up each side of the swingarm; stiff suspension; and style: upswept seat with the 'Z' pattern styling. It would kick arse!

I could immediately see myself flogging this bike mercilessly around town, keeping the revs towards the stratosphere: I would be heard from a mile away; taking it to the open-class bikes around my local bends...

So part of me was a little disappointed inside when I hear the Z650L will be based off its Learner-Approved parallel-twin Ninja, with a two-into-one exhaust, basic suspension, and no 'Z' on the seat... 'How dare they destroy the sanctity of Z,' I thought to myself. I love the 'Z' seat!

I struggled with these thoughts all the way up until I saw one in the flesh for the first time, at Kawasaki Motor Australia's press launch for the Z650L and Ninja 650L.

There it was, laid bare in front of me, all-black with white accents. It looks good. Real good. Expectation is such a silly thing when you take a moment think about it.

It was at that moment I came back to reality. The zed in my head would make no sense in today's market: too expensive and uncompromising, with its power too high in the rev range. But the zed before me does: it's affordable and easy to own, being aimed squarely at learners: newcomers and returners alike.

The Z650L is also a major departure from the ER-6nL it replaces. The looks and style have been updated. Gone is the offset rear shock and twin spar frame. I really like the 'Z' LED tail light, it's distinct and purposeful. While the engine remains largely the same - in capacity, bore, stroke and gear ratios, with the Z650L producing slightly less power, but slightly more torque. The airbox, throttle bodies, injectors, intake and exhaust cams, intake ports are all new and have been refined to increase low-to-mid response, while Kawasaki has added a slip and assist clutch. A new trellis frame has also been used and accounts for a lot of weight saving: all up the new Z650L weighs 14kg less than the ER6nL it replaces. Furthermore, Kawasaki has removed some unsprung weight too - the swingarm, wheels and front axle weigh less which should see handling improve.

Continued >

FIRST RIDE KAWASAKI NINJA + Z650L LAUNCH REPORT



Z650L's naked instrumentation.



Underslung muffler hides a large collector-box.



Engine and frame updates are significant.



No 'Z' pattern but a nice seat all the same.



SPECIFICATIONS:

2017 KAWASAKI Z650L (NINJA 650L)

- **ENGINE:** Liquid-cooled parallel-twin
- **CAPACITY:** 649cc
- **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed
- **DRIVE TYPE:** Chain
- **FUEL CAPACITY:** 17L
- **FRAME TYPE:** Trellis
- **SEAT HEIGHT:** 790mm
- **WEIGHT:** 186kg Wet (192kg Wet)
- **FRONT SUSPENSION:** 41mm telescopic fork
- **REAR SUSPENSION:** Horizontal back-link with adjustable preload
- **BRAKES:** F: Dual semi-floating 300mm discs with two-piston calipers and ABS;
R: Single 220mm disc with single-piston caliper and ABS
- **TYRES:** Dunlop Sportmax
F: 120/70ZR17; R: 160/60ZR17
- **PRICE:** \$9,699 +ORC
(Blizzard White Ninja \$9,999+ORC;
KRT Replica Ninja \$10,299+ORC)



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Styling aligns the new Zed within its family.



Tank protector is standard on both bikes.



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Continued >



Kawasaki's main focus for its 650 twins remains towards making them practical for learners and everyday riders in everyday riding situations. It starts with the quick-revving engine tuned for low- to mid-range torque; continuing through the lightweight trellis frame and swingarm, to the low seat height and wide, flat handlebars, plush suspension and neutral-positioned footpegs; culminating with a slip and assist clutch, adjustable levers, comprehensive instruments which feature a gear-position indicator and shift light amongst other fuel and distance read-outs, and most importantly: ABS brakes.

On paper Kawasaki has made a bike which everybody is able to use, inspiring confidence in fresh-faced or returner riders the machine is aimed, whilst also making it very user-friendly for commuters.

Ninja 650L

My last experience with a Kawasaki Ninja was at Sydney Motorsport Park, onboard the super-popular Ninja 300. I took one out in standard trim against mid-teens on their one-make series Ninja 300 Cup bikes. The whippets pantsed me around the short circuit on their all but beefed-up machines. I had a ball, unable to believe the

capability of the bike, let alone ones with track-based modifications.

My eyes were opened.

I have also ridden the previous generation Ninja 650L before I started working for Cycle Torque. I sat in someone's blindspot for a fraction of a second too long on my way to work one morning and got clipped after they changed lanes without checking their blindspot beforehand. Miraculously I stayed on the bike, both it and myself were left completely unscathed. Lesson learnt: if you are in a blind spot, move... Some physics beyond my pay grade obviously played its part too, but I put it down to the riding position of the Ninja, which allowed me to stay in control as I veered off-course towards a convoy of parked cars. My confidence in the bike's ability to keep me on the road has been pretty high since that day.

For 2017, the 650 Ninja is for the most part a new bike. As I mentioned earlier the biggest change for Kawasaki was doing away with the twin spar frame. All up the Ninja weighs 19kg less than the 2016 model.

Being a Ninja, it has a full fairing, which means the cockpit is mounted further forward in the windscreen instead of the 'bars. This also means a need for different



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'bars compared to the Z650L too. Other than that, everything else is practically the same on both bikes. As I said before the engine update makes slightly less power, but more torque optimised in the low- to -mid ranges, which maxes out a bit higher at 6,500rpm.

It is interesting to note here that Kawasaki will bring out a non-LAMS, full-powered Ninja 650, which makes maximum torque at lower revs than the MY16 Ninja. From what I could gather at the launch, the learner model is definitely restricted at the throttle body. Judging by the Ninjas 650Ls of years past, there is more than likely a removable plug which restricts the ECU too.

Kawasaki currently doesn't expect to bring out the full-powered Z650 to Australia, but readers with common tools can leave it up to their own devices over what they can do to get the most out of both bikes, although it could void any warranty, insurance or registration...

The ride

I set off from Kawasaki HQ on the Z650L and the first thing I notice is the assist part of the clutch and the engine response. The bike gets away from a stop with ease, building speed through the low- to mid-range just as it

said on the box. The suspension is set on the softer side and soaks up the uneven surfaces and concrete to tarmac changes well. The riding position feels pretty good too. the 'bars slightly forward of upright, 'pegs lying directly underneath the seat.

We ride through Sydney traffic for around an hour or so, heading West to the Hawkesbury Region: through Pitt Town towards Wisemans Ferry. The engine's strong performance in this real-world setting is clear. It doesn't need to be kept on the boil, instead it's happier toiling: pulling along nicely in each gear. Speed limits up to 80km/h can be reached under 5,000 revs. The bike stops well too, two big 300mm rotors hugged by two-piston calipers mounted regularly up front are intuitive and confidence inspiring in traffic.

As we approach some faster bends I notice some slight vibrations through the 'pegs and seat between 5,500 and 6500 rpm. The slip and assist clutch makes it feel impossible to stuff up down-shifts. Up-shifts without using the clutch feel smooth and positive. The bike is geared short: accelerating in top gear from low speeds is achievable, though it will have a tendency to sign off

Continued >

FIRST RIDE KAWASAKI NINJA + Z650L LAUNCH REPORT

earlier in the rev range. Not that this really matters - the Z650L is good for speeds well beyond the highway limit. In a few emergency braking exercises it takes some serious stopping before ABS engages. I am really impressed with the ABS unit, clicking on smoothly, taking over then handing the reins back to the rider. The seat is fairly plush, but a bit over an hour into the ride I notice the contour is starting to cause a bit of discomfort. We do a few passes to get some photos done and it starts to rain.

Time for lunch.

The rain had stopped by the time we got to Wisemans Ferry, where we were allowed a bit over an hour's worth of 'free time' to test the bikes on our own. By this time I switched over to ride the Ninja 650L. Not much separates the Ninja from the Zed in terms of rideability besides some slight ergos and the steering geometry of the Z is slightly sharper than the Ninja. I couldn't really notice any difference in steering though - both felt precise and stable. Both the Ninja and Z650L have a great feature I didn't really notice straight away either. The radiator fan has been tilted 90 degrees so it blows hot air downwards, away from the rider's legs. Not noticing it means that it's doing its job well: it allowed me to concentrate more on the road.

Throughout the free-ride the front suspension showed signs of duress under hard braking due to its softer set up, as did the rear through mid-corner bumps, but really, it coped quite well considering it was carrying a lot of rider at speeds one could lose their licence. The engine has no trouble performing up to those speeds and it's most enjoyable using the torque to your advantage - taking corners a touch slower and accelerating harder out of them. Dunlop Sportmax tyres offer plenty



of grip and feedback in the drying conditions. The shift light is a great feature, the rev needle even flickers to let you know it's time to change gear. What was perhaps a bigger indicator it was time to shift gears was the vibrations felt through the seat, which became more apparent because I was keeping the revs up to the bike. Overall I am pretty impressed. I turn around to head

back, but I ended up switching bikes and doing a few more passes of the road instead...

Ninja or Zed?

Compared to the Z650L, I found the Ninja to be slightly more comfortable.

The 'bars are faux-styled clip-ons which mount to the top clamp instead of the forks but they in fact sit a touch higher than the Z650L's

Continued >



Continued >

FIRST RIDE KAWASAKI NINJA + Z650L LAUNCH REPORT

'bars. It perches the rider more upright which in turn affects the knee angle which I found suited me a bit better.

There's a bit more wind protection too, but besides that, both bikes ride equally as good and are both extremely confidence inspiring.

If you are a taller rider like I am or spend a bit more time commuting at freeway speeds the Ninja 650L would be the pick in my opinion. The slightly more-upright riding position and extra wind protection is enough to sway my money. If you are of 'normal' stature, I reckon it comes down to picking the style you like most.

Regardless of height or riding style, it's pretty hard to go past the black naked style of the Z650L...

Anyway, colour preference is a subjective thing. Get into your local Kawasaki dealer and check them out in the flesh to see which one you prefer!

Overall

Despite my grandiose expectations, there are no surprises with either the Z650L, or the Ninja 650L in the real world. Kawasaki has done a great job with both bikes, creating great packages for learner/returner/commuter market. Most people would be able to jump



on either bike straight away after doing their two-day pre-learner practical and build their confidence quickly. Anyone graduating to their Ps from a smaller machine will revel in the bikes' usability. The list of practical rider-friendly features is as good as it is long, inspiring so much confidence and offers strong, reliable performance for their their respective category. ■

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MT RANGE. IT'S A FAMILY REUNION

BRP's side-by-side squared

BRP has unveiled a new four-seater flagship Maverick X3 MAX side-by-side vehicle in which its press material says furthers "its push to reshape the super-sport market segment."

The Maverick X3 MAX promises to have the same handling and power of the two-seat Maverick X3, while offering new levels of comfort and control.

Anne-Marie LaBerge, spokesperson for BRP said the X3 Max "positions Can-Am to meet market demands for a clear leader in the four-person sport segment and adheres to our forward-thinking approach when it comes to innovation, design and refining the consumer experience."

BRP aims to achieve high-performance through trophy-truck-inspired four-link TTX rear suspension and re-calibrated, FOX shocks and front arched A-arms. A high-rigidity chassis, made from fully welded DP980 steel, is expected to deliver precise handling, stiffer torsion and exceptional strength according to press material.

The engine is the same 154-horsepower turbocharged and intercooled in-line three-cylinder engine featured in the two-seater Maverick, while an efficient, high-response CVT transmission has been calibrated to eliminate the problems associated with turbo lag and also enhance throttle response.

All four seats in the Maverick X3 MAX vehicle are on the same level, which could provide the passengers with a better all-round experience, so long as the two in the back can see more than the two helmets bouncing around in the front seats.



This shouldn't happen as the seats are four-way adjustable to accommodate a wide variety of passengers, enhance comfort and better connect each occupant with the vehicle.

The rear seats have over five centimetres of height adjustment and up to 10 centimetres of forward adjustment.

The two-seat Maverick X3 side-by-side vehicle has been around for a few years and has become well-established in the off-road market.

Cycle Torque will be looking on with interest to see if the machine makes it to Australia and how well the four-seater platform will be well-received in the market. ■

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CYCLE TORQUE BOOK SHOP

1. Classic Bike Dreaming

IT'S fourth time lucky for Newcastle author Peter J Uren with his latest tome, Classic Bike Dreaming, yet more stories of an old motorcycle mechanic.

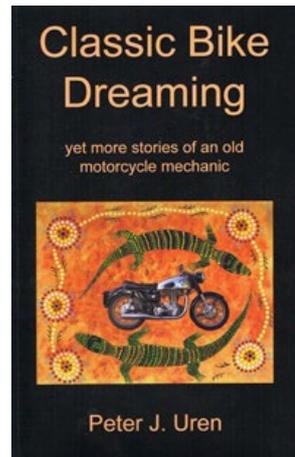
It follows in the footsteps of his first three books The Old Mechanic, Dominator in the Shadows and the Classic Bike Workshop. For a new author Peter is certainly making his mark in the publishing world. His latest story follows the plot already developed in the first three books and as each book came out you could see the evolution of Peter's writing style as he sought to further develop his characters and focus more on building them and their inter-relationships.

Be prepared for a bit more of an emotional ride with his latest work as Peter introduces a new, if far more complex character, tangled in a few more social issues.

The new character is an Aboriginal of the Kamilaroi mob who is trying to live between two cultures. Peter's knowledge of the issues involved comes from personal connections who have first hand experience and he has captured the essence of the struggles and issues that are confronted. He has woven a rich story not only about his new character but the impact that this newcomer's arrival has on the classic bike workshop we've come to know.

Peter joined Stroud Writers in July 2012 and by September the following year he had written and published his first book. He says that this one is likely to be the last in the series.

Price \$19.50 plus postage each, or all four for \$69.90



2. Riding the road of bones 2 disc DVD set. - \$39.99

The 30,000 km motorbike ride from London to Magadan, on the edge of Russia, has been described as one of the most challenging rides in the world. For four long months a group of adventure riders from around the world travelled across a quarter of the Earth's surface, pushing themselves and their bikes to the limit.

3. Italian Custom Motorcycles - \$39.99

Many books have been published about Italian motorcycles, but none has focused exclusively on the Italian motorcycle-based chopper, bobber, trike, and quad custom bike scene - until now.

4. And On That Bombshell - \$32.99

I was Top Gear's script editor for 13 years and all 22 series. I basically used to check spelling and think of stupid gags about The Stig. I also got to hang around with Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May. Then

I realised that I had quite a few stories to tell from behind the scenes on the show. I remembered whose daft idea it was to get a dog. I recalled the willfully stupid way in which we decorated our horrible office. I had a sudden flashback to the time a Bolivian drug lord threatened to kill us.

I decided I should write down some of these stories. So I have. I hope you like them.

5. Eyes Wide Open - Isle of Man - \$24.95

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The world's most dangerous racetrack...

A father and son realise a dream...

This is their story.

6. Weekend Warriors 1 and 2 - \$44.95

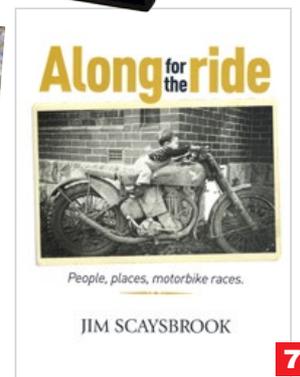
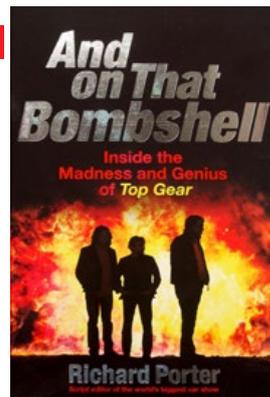
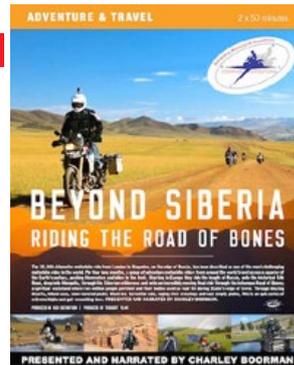
About five years ago Shaun, Andy and I (Jake) started to run out of places to ride. We were sick of riding the same places time and time again so we decided to pay a visit to the Melbourne Map Centre in Chadstone to see if there was a guide book on the subject.

Much to our surprise there was nothing to be found. Sure there were heaps of 4WD and Mountain Bike books but, alas, no trail bike books. The guys in the shop were also surprised, as they had had a lot of enquiries from other trail bike riders.

This gave us an idea - why not write our own book? And that is exactly what we did!

7. Along for the ride - \$39.95

Jim Scaysbrook has enjoyed a rich and varied life in which motorcycles have always been the common theme. Itching to follow his father's footsteps, he began racing at the age of 16 and has since competed in virtually every form of competition, including both motocross and road racing at international level. He has competed on the American professional motocross scene, at the infamous Isle of Man TT, and throughout Asia.



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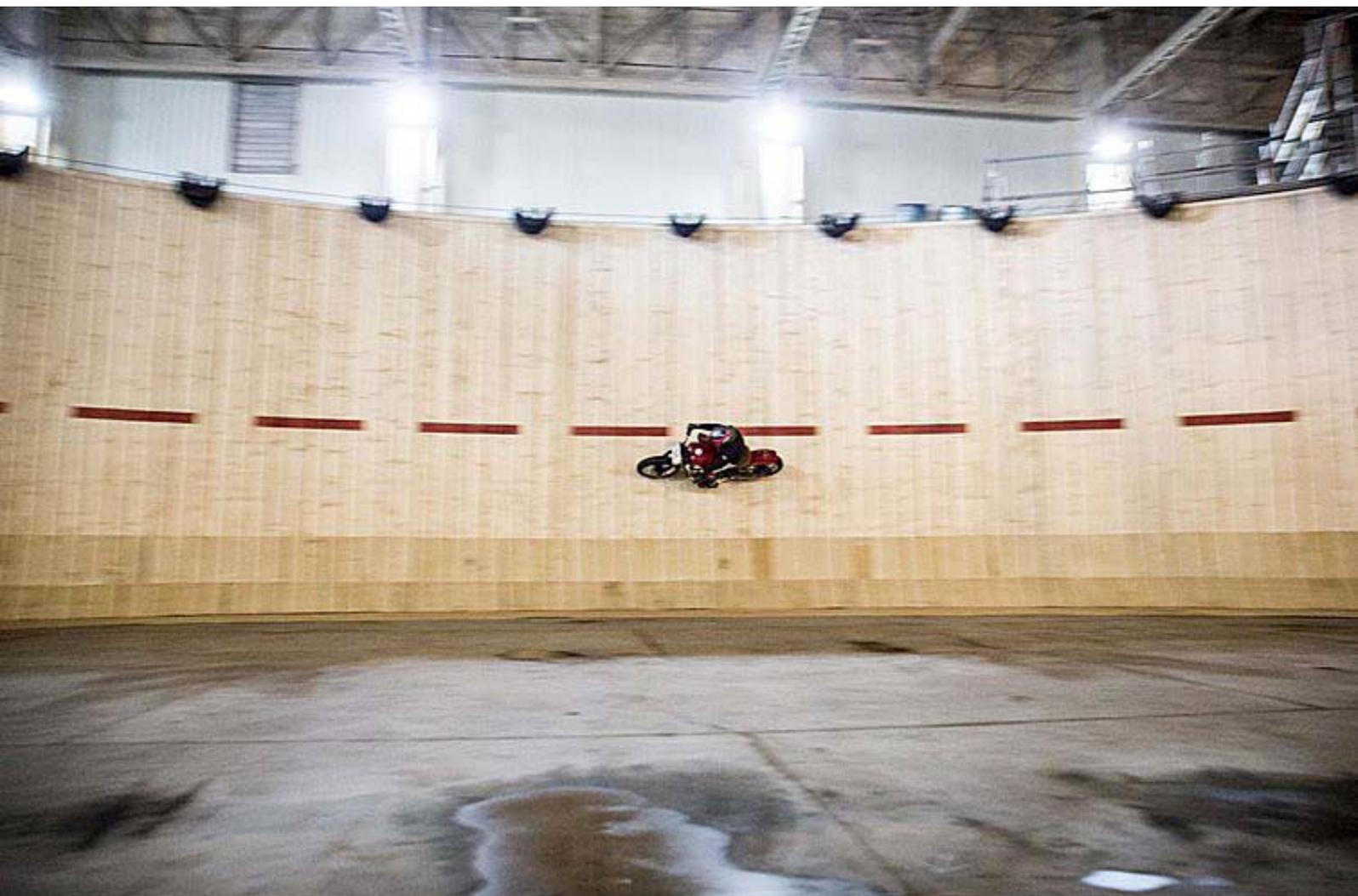
How to ride the **Wall of Death**



Here's the story behind
Guy Martin's Wall of Death
speed record attempt...

★ STORY BY HUGH HUNT

– Reader in engineering dynamics and vibration, University of Cambridge



Guy Martin riding the Wall of Death during the live Channel 4 record attempt.

.....

The Wall of Death has been the most enigmatic dare-devil motorbike stunt for more than 100 years. Motorcyclists ride around the inside of a vertical wall, rather like a huge barrel, at speeds of around 30mph. Most Wall of Death “drums” are about 32 feet (10 metres) in diameter.

There is a Wall of Death near Cambridge, UK, run by Ken Fox. He was approached by NorthOne Television to assist in a mad project to set the world speed record for a motorcycle ride around the wall. The stunt was performed live on Channel 4 television – and I was lucky enough to be right there, as a consultant engineer for the show.

It was thought that no one has ever ridden the Wall of Death any faster than 45mph, but during the record attempt, experienced motorcyclist Guy Martin attempted to reach 80mph, a speed which would completely smash existing records. So how did he do? And how on Earth can a motorcycle ride around a vertical wall?

The G-force awakens

The limiting factor for speed on the Wall of Death is human physiology. When riding the wall, you are subject to high acceleration – or G-force. Under these conditions, blood drains away from your brain and eyes, much as water is flung out of clothes during the spin cycle of a washing machine. It leads to tunnel vision, temporary blindness, difficulty breathing and eventually unconsciousness.

When riding the wall, the Gs are generated by what most people call “centrifugal force”, but in actual fact there is no such thing. Physicists prefer to say that there is a “centripetal

force” acting on your body as it goes around in a circle, but I’m an engineer, not a physicist, so I’m quite happy to go with the majority and call it centrifugal force.

Either way, the highest G-force that most of us will ever experience is when riding a roller coaster, where the body (very briefly) can be subject to accelerations of up to 5G. This is the equivalent of carrying an extra five-times your own weight throughout your body. Imagine: heavier arms, heavier legs, heavier head.

When you’re riding the Wall of Death the centrifugal force pushes you outwards and then friction holds you up. Imagine the wall was wet and slippery – you’d slide right down. That’s why it was very important that the wall was kept dry and free from dust and drops of oil. Clearly, the wall has to be built indoors and we needed a very big hangar for that.

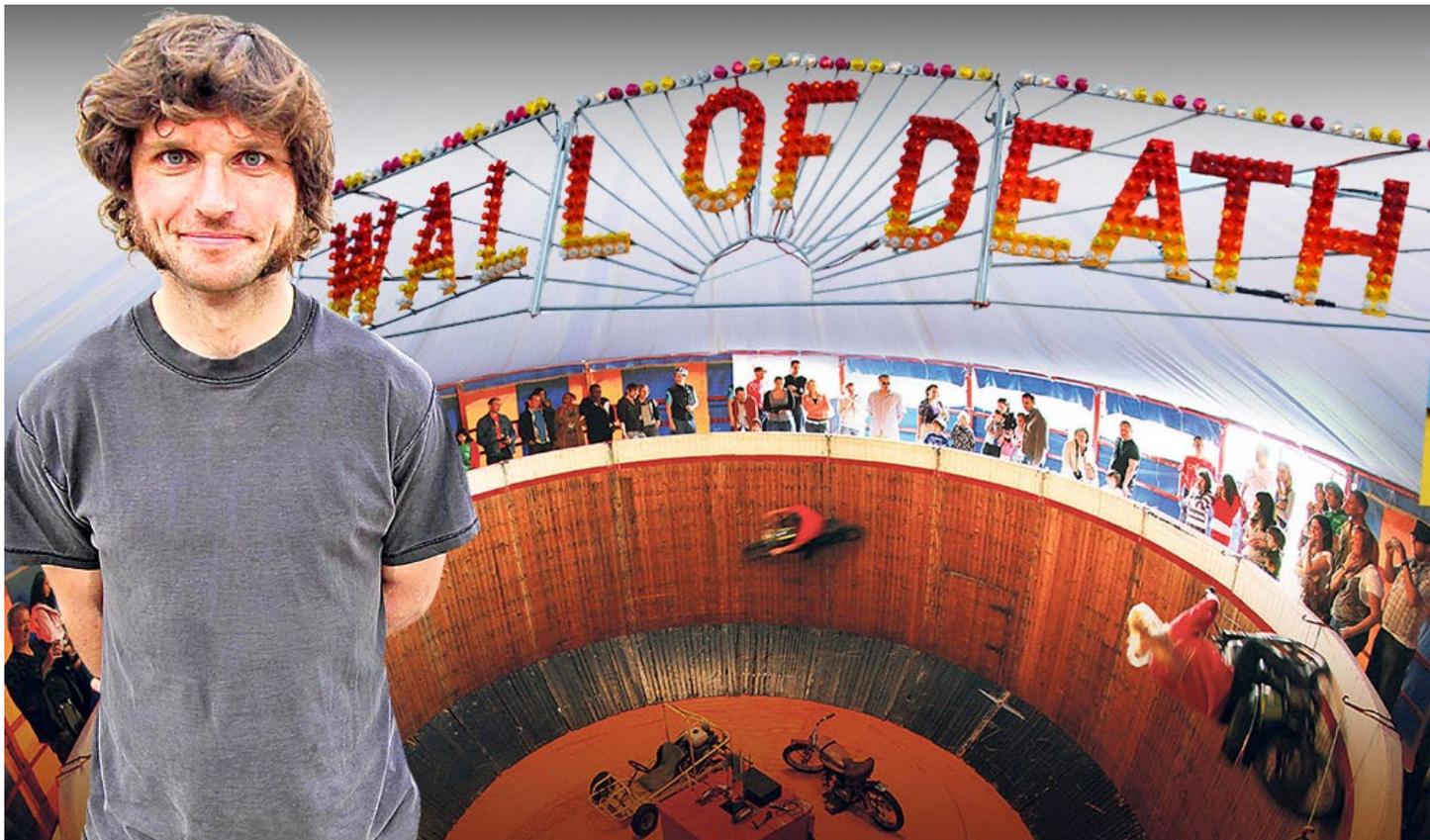
The training for a high-G environment involves flights in stunt aircraft. During those Guy found himself passing out at around 7G – and it doesn’t bear thinking about would happen if consciousness was lost when riding a motorbike at 80mph on the wall. Guy had a serious crash in August 2015 at the Ulster Grand Prix. He was lucky to come out of it alive, but only six months later he was in full swing training for the Wall of Death.

So how fast can you go?

Let’s assume that Guy doesn’t want to exceed 7G (remember that he’d be experiencing the extreme forces for far longer than someone on a rollercoaster – and having to control a motorbike, too) and that he wants to ride at 80mph. Well, there is a formula

Continued >

CYCLE TORQUE FEATURE



for calculating the G-force experienced when going around in a circle. It can be worked out using Isaac Newton's famous laws, which is all very appropriate, because Newton came from Grantham in Lincolnshire and the record-breaking attempt took place in a WWII airforce hanger not far away, in the heart of Battle-of-Britain country.

Using Newton's "differential calculus", it turns out that the centrifugal G-force increases with the square of your speed and decreases in proportion to the Wall of Death's diameter.

This means, for example, that if you travel at 80mph on Ken Fox's 10-metre wall you'd experience 25G of centrifugal force – certain death. But on a bigger wall, say 40 metres in diameter, you'd experience 6.4G – just about within the physiological limit.

The bike also has limits. The often-used, iconic Wall of Death Indian Scout bike has to be specially reinforced with stronger tyres, stiffened suspension and a modified engine to cope with the high Gs. The wall itself also needs to be resistant to the centrifugal force of the bike and rider, which at 80mph will be in excess of two tonnes.

Breaking the record

With the maths in mind, a huge Wall of Death was constructed especially for Guy's record attempt. It was 37.5 metres in diameter and quite a dramatic sight. It was constructed out of upturned shipping containers, welded together and lined with timber. A refuge for paramedics was constructed in the centre so if anything went wrong, medical help could be summoned in a matter of seconds.

The main hazards were related to the high G-forces, however. If Guy passed out, then the worst fear was that he'd fly out of the top of the arena and hit the roof truss. He would probably not survive such an event so a barrier was installed at the top edge of the wall. Even so, hitting this barrier at 80mph would be exceedingly unpleasant. Guy was given a large red line to follow so that he would know how to keep clear of the barrier, even when his eyesight began to fail because of the high Gs.

Guinness World Records was present to officiate – and required a speed over 60mph in either one of two attempts. In his first attempt on the Indian Scout, Guy achieved 72mph and



The author, Guy and the maths of the Wall of Death.

there was much celebration. But during his second attempt (on his own home-made bike), he reached 78mph, smashing his own record.

He wanted to ride again and go faster but he was already experiencing problems with his vision – the first sign of blackout. His main complaint, as he said afterwards, was that the G-force (estimated at 6.4G) was pressing on his bladder and he was busting for a pee the whole time!

The Future?

If anyone is going to break Guy Martin's record of 78mph then they will have to build a wall at least as big as the Lincolnshire one. In training, Guy thinks he once reached a peak of 85mph but he backed off quickly as he was blacking out at this speed. Perhaps on a bigger wall a new record will be set, but building a bigger wall is quite an undertaking. I think the record is safe for a few years. ■

This article was originally published www.theconversation.com.

Watch the videos associated with the story:
<http://www.cycletorque.com.au/ride-wall-death/>

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Five's 2017 MX gloves

French glove manufacturer Five has added two new off-road gloves to its range: the MXF ProRider S; and the MXF3.

The ProRider S glove is the latest generation of motocross gloves built based on the experience of MXGP Five riders Valentin Guillod and Dylan Ferrandis.

The topside is made from a single piece of YP Mesh, finger contours are in small Airmesh, while the thumbs also feature comfort gel at grip contact points in order to reduce the risk of blisters. The palms have protective gel to absorb shock in the event of a fall.

The MXF3 has been completely redesigned for 2017, the glove features a mesh topside for airflow and a synthetic leather palm area. With thermoplastic rubber and Velcro adjustment tab, lycra finger contours and trick looks, Five's MXF3 provides great protection and style.

Both gloves are available in a range of colours.

Price: ProRider S \$49.95; MX3: \$34.95 RRP

Get them from: In stores soon

More info: motonational.com.au



Just1 lands in Australia

The J12 helmet by Just1 Racing is an Italian designed, premium helmet new to the Australian market.

Designed for riders, by riders, Just1 Racing has plenty of features like top and rear air extractors, adjustable air vents as well as removable and washable inner lining made from highly breathable fabrics.

The J12 will keep you as cool as a cucumber while you ride. Weighing in at only 1100 grams thanks to the carbon fibre outer shell, the J12 has some very cool safety features engineered for the user's protection. The anatomical structure of the helmet with the exclusive neck brace front fit system is designed for better interface with a neck brace. The J12 also features an emergency removal cheek pad system, making removal of the helmet much easier for first responders and safer for the rider in an emergency situation.

The J12 premium helmet by Just1 Racing is designed for the rider who refuses to settle for second best.

Price: J12 Carbon \$629 RRP; J12 Dominator \$649 RRP; J12 RockStar 2.0 \$699 RRP

Get them from: Bike shops in Australia

More info: ficeda.com.au



Come first with Polisport

Polisport pit boards are a great accessory for any team to have. With a large customisable area, you can place your logo, brand or team name on the back of the board for great visibility at races and other sports events.

The Polisport pit board is lightweight and easy to carry, with large ergonomic handles, surface area and are also easy to clean (make sure you use a whiteboard marker).

Price: \$39.95 RRP

Get them from: merchandise.linkint.com.au

More info: linkint.com.au



Shoei's airhead

The Shoei GT-Air is a sports-touring helmet made from a dual-layer, multi-density EPS foam with a fibreglass and organic fibre compound shell. The helmet features an internal flip-down sun shield, Shoei's QR-N base plate system for quick and easy visor changes/cleaning, fully-removable, washable and replacable 3D max-dry comfort liner. There's an emergency quick-release system which allows easy and safe removal of the cheek pads things unfortunately go awry. The GT-Air comes with a helmet bag, chin curtain and breath guard, as well as being intercom compatible.

Price: \$949.90 RRP

Get them from: Better bike shops in Australia

More info: mcleodaccessories.com.au

Arrows for T120 and Thruxton

Arrow has announced slip-on reverse-cone mufflers are available for the Triumph T120 series Bonneville, as well as the Thruxton and Thruxton R.

The slip-ons are made from nichrome stainless steel, which is used for making the jet pipes in turbine aircraft engines. The mufflers are road-legal with the removable dB killer.

Price: \$1,649 RRP

Get them from: Available now

More info: linkint.com.au



Roll off with Ariete

Ariete's new roll-off goggle comes fully-assembled and ready to use with two roll-off films, a mud visor and an anti-stick slide rail. If you are not already aware, MA has banned the use of all tear-offs in competition since the start of the year.

Ariete also provides a roll-off lens kit for those who already own Ariete goggles

Price: Goggles: \$119.95 RRP; Lens: \$89.95 RRP

Get them from: Better bike shops

More info: linkint.com.au



Ventura for XSR

Ventura's venerable bike-pack is now available for the Yamaha XSR900 '16 and '17 models.

The key to Ventura's system is the L-bracket which has been measured and made specific to fit each model in Ventura's range.

Once fitted there are a number of luggage options available from 10 litres capacity to 102 litres.

Price: Varies

Get them from: Your local motorcycle store

More info: venturarak.com.au/



Comfy, sporty...

I've been wearing a pair of XPD XP3-S boots for our sports and track testing over than last year or so and I'm happy to report they have proven to be everything I want in a sports boot and nothing I don't.

Marketed as a sports, race and sports-touring boot it's trying to be a lot of things to a lot of people and the XP3's do a pretty good job across the board.

Built around a fairly stiff base and heel section, there's still flexibility for movement thanks to panels above the heel and across the bridge of your foot.

Five polyurethane shields on each boot protect the shin, toes and ankle, while ventilation holes in the side make them useable even in hot weather, although your feet do still get sweaty.

There's a half-height zip and velcro flap closure system which is excellent and replaceable stainless-steel toe scrapers for those who don't drag their feet back onto the footpegs.

If I have any hesitation recommending the XP3-S boots it's the price: at \$475.00 (RRP) they cost a fair bit, but they are well built and aren't trashed despite a fair bit of track and road time.

Price: \$475 RRP

Get them from: Better bike shops

More info: spidi.com.au

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Get into some Rebels

Jeans seem like they haven't changed in decades, but the reality is there are ongoing, if subtle, changes always being made to the style and design of the most popular form of motorcycle wear.

Of course changes to fashion don't make them any safer, and standard fashion jeans offer appallingly low levels of protection in a motorcycle accident, which is why we like riding in Draggin' Jeans.

Australia's first Kevlar-lined jeans manufacturer is making a huge range of riding jeans for the world market these days and are always coming up with new design and styles to suit the market and improve the product.

The Rebel Jean is one of those new models, featuring super-soft stretch denim in light blue with fashionable scuff marks.

The safety's on the inside, with the Kevlar Roomoto lining being highly abrasion resistant and giving the protection you need in a slide. Additional protection can be added by using the optional crash protection pads built into the Rebel jeans.

I've been wearing Draggin' Jeans for decades and the Rebels are my favourite so far. The stretch denim isn't so much a throwback to the 1980s but more a subtle way of getting the jeans to be more comfortable, on and off the bike, while the internal lining keeps your skin away from the Kevlar, making them more comfortable again.

Priced at \$299 the Rebels might be more than regular jeans, but the hassle of growing skin back makes them fantastic to wear on a bike.

– Nigel Paterson



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This month Paul has won an SJS 500amp Smart Start charger which feature a personal power pack and jump starter for the letter of the month. Jump start your bike, car and phone. Thanks to Kenma, www.kenma.com.au

Send your letters (and/or great bike pictures to *The Editor, Cycle Torque, PO Box 687 Warners Bay, NSW 2282* or email letters@cycletorque.com.au



Two Marks don't make a right

G'day Mark,

I got a good kick out of reading your letter. (*Digital Fans - Dec16*) I also enjoy reading the digital version of Cycle Torque, and am similarly afflicted with osteo-arthritis in both knees and dream of the day the quacks will give me new knees. The clincher was when I read your name, as mine is Mark Jackson as well.

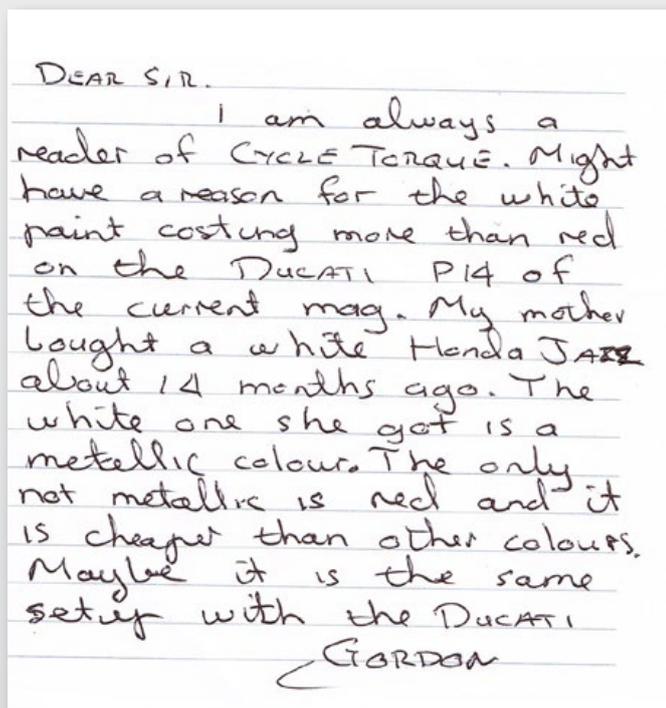
Keep up the good work there *Cycle Torque*.

Mark Jackson

Hi Mark (if that is your real name), what is the chance that you both have the same e-mail address too? --RG

Why White costs more

It's not often we receive letters in the post anymore. We're glad this one turned up. - RG



Summer's gone to his head...

Your editorial in the Jan/Feb issue of Cycle Torque has me a little concerned for its author, Ryan Grubb. I think he may have 'a touch of the sun'.

Summer is possibly the worst time of the year to ride in most of Australia. In the north it's simply too hot to wear reasonable safety gear – mesh-style jackets, ventilated leathers and un-faired bikes help, but if it's over 30 degrees getting out on a bit is tiring and dangerous.

Of course it's cooler in the evenings, but that's when the animals come out and dodging kangaroos isn't much fun, but it sure gets the heart racing.

One exception is cruising around the cities at night, which can be nice if you're into that sort of thing, but it's also when the yobbos come out to play.

Summertime offers great riding in Tasmania and New Zealand, but for most of the Australian mainland, wait until Autumn.

Syd Tyrrell, Sydney

Syd - If only you could have told that to the bloke who went for a ride with a few of his mates on the Putty, January 2, to 'wait until Autumn'. He never made it home to his family. - RG

Sideways on the Tenere

THE video you guys made of the Yamaha Super Tenere has the rider - I presume Alex Pickett from the test in your last issue - really sideways, he looks like he's about to crash? What the hell happened, did the traction control let him down?

Paul Grahams, e-mail

Young Alex was showing off for the camera a bit and he'd turned off the traction control. He'd been stepping out the big Tenere for the cameras when it hit a rock and went a bit pear-shaped, but he saved it - years of racing make a difference!

If you missed the video, check it out here: goo.gl/D09O3C -NP.



ROBBIE BUGDEN



Photo credit: Russell Colvin

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