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Mike Jones
DesmoSport Ducati Race Team
ASBK CHAMPION 2019



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AUSTRALIAN **ROADRIDER** THE REAL RIDE



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SUMMER BLUES

I hate the heat. I think I'd have preferred global cooling to global warming, given a choice.

When I was kid, air conditioning in cars was rare, a very welcome experience when I got to travel without sticking to the vinyl seats of Dad's Holden Special.

In my late teens I was a motorcycle courier, delivering packages for a living under the blazing West Australian Sun, and at one stage I decided it was better to ride without a jacket and avoid heat stress than risk a crash because my body was overheating.

These days I do things differently. I'll still ride a bike in the summer, but ventilated gear provides air flow and protection in a spill. A flip-top helmet gives me an open face or full-face while on the move. Shorty boots make a big difference.

In this issue you'll find *Australian Road Rider's* summer glove feature, a guide to choosing summer gloves and a quick look at seven different sets.

The common theme is mesh panels to create airflow, essential for keeping your cool in the summer.

I try to avoid temperatures reaching into the mid-thirties though, even if I am wearing the right gear.

I discovered the Camelback decades ago, but they haven't really caught on with road riders. Camelback is a brand of hydration backpack, popular with dirt bike riders, and bushwalkers. Essentially a plastic bladder with a drinking tube which slides into a backpack, a Camelback lets you drink without stopping, and staying hydrated will keep you a lot more comfortable on hot day.

I use one in the summer, and if I'm going on a really hot ride, I'll carefully freeze the bladder half-full, topping it up with cold water when I'm ready to ride – the ice keeps your back cool and the drinking water cold.

Stop more often than usual to cool down. Drink electrolytes, which aid in quicker re-hydration. Jump in a river or steam to cool down.

Drag your arse out of bed around dawn and go for a breakfast ride – 90 minutes or so up your favourite road, a quick cafe brekkie and back before the sun's bite is really harsh.

You can do the same in the evenings, although choose your route to avoid wildlife.

I've been a city dweller most of my life, and I've always enjoyed night rides through town. With traffic volumes low and the air temperature mild, night riding is under-rated by most motorcyclists I reckon. In the winter I ride during the day and drive at night: in Summer I tend to flip that.

Buying a second bike for the summer isn't a bad idea too, something naked... but make sure you test ride it, some machines produce calf and thigh melting levels of heat, especially if you're not riding at a reasonable pace.

Removing fairing lowers and screens is also an option on many bikes, although not one I see exercised very often.

Most of us are lucky enough to live where we can ride all year – many Americans and Europeans don't have that luxury due to the extreme winters, and in most of Asia riding is always hot.

Riding in an Australian Summer can be tough, but it's usually manageable if you plan your rides carefully.

– NIGEL PATERSON

Do you have any stories about riding in extreme conditions? We'd love to hear about them – npaterson@umco.com.au.



READY TO RACE
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Photo: F. Lackner

UNLIMITED ADVENTURE

The KTM 790 ADVENTURE is a high-performance motorcycle that's lightweight and compact, one that specialises in adventure touring that has the ability to explore offroad when the tarmac ends. Designed with KTM's offroad genes it offers unlimited adventure whether it's on a twisty mountain pass, offroad trail or transcontinental crossing. The new KTM 790 ADVENTURE is made for you to go and find these roads less travelled.

KTM

Please make no attempt to imitate the illustrated riding scenes. Always wear protective clothing and observe the applicable provisions of the road traffic regulations. The illustrated vehicles may vary in selected details from the production models and some illustrations feature optional equipment available at additional cost.



AUSTRALIAN **RoadRIDER** THE REAL RIDE

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Kawasaki's W800 Cafe,
at speed. Paterson pic.

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FOR THE RIDE



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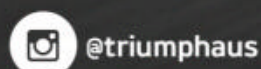
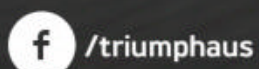
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Find out more, visit TriumphMotorcycles.com.au and stay connected online.





SUPERCHARGED, NAKED... AFFORDABLE?

Nothing draws a crowd like Kawasaki's Supercharged H2 roadburner, but with a price in the stratosphere they aren't seen on the streets very often – but with the new Z H2, that might be about to change.

The new naked 998cc supercharged four should be priced at around \$25,000... we hope. Pricing, as we go to press, hasn't been announced, so jump onto roadrider.com.au and check for an update, although insider information is pointing to more affordable pricing as Kawasaki endeavours to make its supercharged bikes more affordable.

Whatever the price, the Z H2 looks like becoming an instant classic. It's got a trellis frame, just like the H2, aggressive good looks, modern electronics to keep the power under control and good levels of equipment.

Kawasaki has spent a lot of time developing its supercharger and how it integrates with the engine, engine management, fuel injection and throttle response to build a bike it claims is suitable for a wide range of riders, not just those few who can ride an extremely high-powered bike safely.

The collectable nature of the machine is enhanced by Kawasaki's claim this new flagship model lead a series of new Z series bikes into the future – and the first model is almost always the most collectable in the long run.

There are all the features we'd expect in such a machine, and more:

quickshifter, hydraulic Assist & Slipper clutch, Showa Big Piston front forks, four rider modes and advanced electronics.

There's a new TFT instrument panel with App integration, Bluetooth connectivity and a host of optional accessories. **ARR**



217HP FIREBLADE SP

Honda's 2020 CBR1000RR-R SP will be released soon, with advanced aerodynamics, electronics, friction-reducing material coatings and new technologies all aimed at producing the best road-legal track bike it's ever made. No, we don't know how much it will cost yet, but be assured it won't be cheap.

The new bike shares the bore and stroke of its MotoGP-winning RC213V V-four, although the Fireblade remains an inline four. Producing a claimed 217hp in standard trim, it's definitely going to be popular with the Superbike crowd, both racers and track day riders.

The technology is eye-watering: A semi-cam gear train, finger-follower rocker arms, titanium con-rods, RC213V-S internal friction reduction technologies, piston jets with check ball system and a built-in

bottom bypass passage for the cylinder water jacket. The bore and stroke match the MotoGP bike, so it'll no doubt rev to the stratosphere, which should be a lot of fun on a fast track like Phillip Island or Sydney Motorsport Park. Those are just some of the mechanical features; the electronics are as cutting-edge as it gets, too.

Honda says a six-axis Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU) provides accurate 3D estimation of riding dynamics and provides input to manage all of the electronic systems. It also controls the new rod-type three-level Honda Electronic Steering Damper (HESD).

Throttle By Wire has been enhanced for improved feel and three default riding modes feature options to change power, engine brake, wheelie control and the optimised Honda Selectable Torque Control (HSTC). The electronics package also now includes adjustable Start Mode

(which is launch control by another name).

The aluminium diamond frame features a longer MotoGP-style swingarm, three-level electronic steering damper, second-generation Öhlins Smart Electronic Control suspension, Brembo Stylema brakes and a two-level ABS.

The rear tyre is a fatter 200-section than the rubber on earlier 'Blades.

The bodywork and riding position have an uncompromising focus on aerodynamic performance and the fairing features MotoGP-derived winglets to generate downforce for improved stability under brakes. A full-colour TFT screen and Honda Smart Key are the finishing touches.

The CBR1000RR-R SP will be the only Fireblade variant available for the Australian market, offered in an HRC-inspired Grand Prix Red (tri-colour) or a Matte Pearl Black. **ARR**



STREET POWER

Ducati's new models for 2020 are as much aimed at the street as the track...



PANIGALE STREETFIGHTER

For the hoon inside every Ducatista, Ducati has built what some might consider ridiculous: a 208hp naked.

It's a Panigale V4 with its clothes off, although Ducati has tastefully added back in some stylish bodywork, inspired by the comic book character and movie The Joker.

Practical streetfighter features include higher handlebars, lower footpegs and a more thickly-padded seat. Pillion passengers are better accommodated too, with a new steel subframe and more space for the rider.

The bike is very compact thanks to using the engine as a structural chassis part, with a front frame bolted to the upper crankcase and the rear suspension, swingarm and subframe bolting the engine at the rear.

The engine itself is the 90-degree 1103cc V4 from the Panigale V4. It's close to unchanged from the unit in the Panigale V4, but gearing is shorter for

hard acceleration. There's heaps of torque available from 3000rpm to the peak at 11,500 and on to redline. Helping to control that acceleration are MotoGP-inspired winglets, there to provide downforce on the front end.

Like most Ducatis, the Streetfighter will be available in standard and S-models, the latter featuring semi-active Öhlins Suspension and forged aluminium wheels.

DUCATI PANIGALE V2

With a totally new design, the 955cc Superquadro engine combined with ergonomics and suspension designed for public roads, the new Ducati Panigale V2 could be the best thing for carving up your favourite twisty backroads.

There's 155hp and 104Nm of torque available, controlled by the monocoque chassis, single sided swingarm extensive electronics.

PANIGALE V4

Easier to ride and even more powerful, Ducati's best-selling Panigale V4 has been updated for 2020.

Changes to aerodynamics, electronics, the chassis and throttle mapping have been made to improve lap times and increase a rider's confidence in the machine on the limit.

The 2020 Panigale V4 now has a front frame similar to the one first seen on the V4R, while changes to the chassis and suspension are said to improve turn-in and confidence at maximum lean.

The standard V4 has Showa forks and a Sachs rear shock and steering damper: the S-model has Öhlins NIX-30 forks and TTX36 shock and an Öhlins steering damper.

Both versions have softer springs than earlier models to improve control on public roads and make the ride more comfortable. **ARR**



STREET FIGHTER



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BMW'S NEW 900s

BMW is expanding its range with sportier vertical twins...

BMW F 900 XR

The BMW S 1000 XR is a popular bike among the *Australian Road Rider* crew, its mix of sportsbike performance, sensible ergonomics and excellent long-travel real-world suspension make it a great bike... so much so it's being joined by a twin cylinder version, the new F 900 XR.



Designed for sporty long distance riding, BMW has equipped the new bike with an effective fairing with two-level screen, adjustable seat heights and good pillion accommodation.

The parallel twin motor produces 105 horsepower (77kW) and 92Nm of torque from a powerplant developed from the earlier twins.

The motor is pushing 219kg of motorcycle ready to ride.

Suspension travel is generous, 170mm at the front and 172mm at the rear - so it should handle Aussie roads really well, and even cope when the bitumen ends.

Those specs add up to a machine we're really keen to ride - a bit smaller, lighter and cheaper than the S 1000 XR, without compromising performance or ability much.

F 900 R

Also being introduced is the naked F 900 R, a midrange Roadster with a sporty feel.

The 'R' has shorter travel suspension than the XR, a smaller fuel tank and a little more aggressive riding position.

At 211kg it's a little lighter than the XR.

The new bikes will be here in the first half of 2020, pricing hasn't been announced. **ARR**





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Ducati SuperSport Sport, made light.

From weekend roads to those of the everyday, via winding out-of-town paths, SuperSport takes the energy and excitement of sport wherever it goes. Thanks to its comfortable riding position, a dry weight of 184 Kg (405 lb) and the performance of Testastretta 11° engine delivering 113 HP, every trip becomes a chance to indulge your sport instinct.



SuperSport S equipment - 937 cc Testastretta 11° | Riding Modes | Ducati Safety Pack (Bosch ABS + Ducati Traction Control) | Ducati Quick Shift up/down | Öhlins suspension | Brembo radial brake master cylinder | Adjustable windshield | Consumption 5,9 l/100 km



INDIAN'S CHALLENGER

Indian has announced a new touring Bagger, the Challenger – and it's the first bike to feature the new PowerPlus engine.

The Challenger is a high performance Bagger with an excellent level of standard equipment, and a price to go with it.

There are two models – the Limited (\$39,995 Ride Away) and the Dark Horse (39,595 Ride Away).

Standard equipment includes the new PowerPlus 122hp motor, USD forks and a hydraulically adjustable Fox shock.

The chassis is aluminium, the brakes are from Brembo and features include electronic cruise control, full LED lighting, a long-haul seat, ABS, keyless ignition, and weatherproof saddlebags with over 68 litres of storage space.

The fairing features an adjustable

screen with three inches of travel and air vents.

The Challenger features Indian's Smart Lean Technology, which uses a Bosch IMU to control the cornering ABS and dynamic traction control.

Up front there's Indian's seven inch Ride Command system with Bluetooth, USB mobile phone pairing and a quad-core processor for fast response. **ARR**

INDIAN'S NEW MOTOR

The PowerPlus is Indian's new 108 cubic inch (1769cc) engine, delivering 122 horsepower and 178Nm of torque in its first home, the new Challenger.

Indian claims the new engine will make the Challenger the highest-performing American V-twin ever developed.

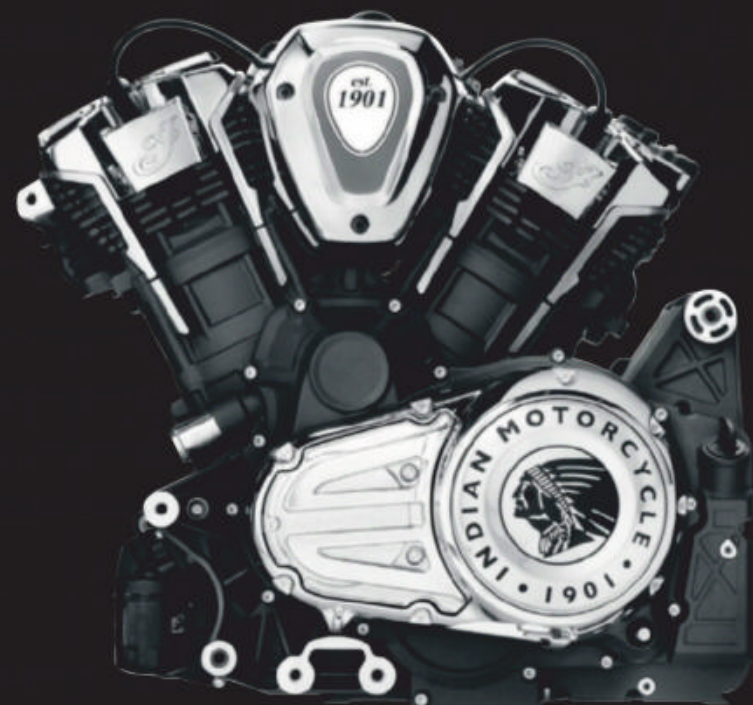
The name is also a nod to the past – from 1916 to 1924 Indian sold a motorcycle named the PowerPlus.

"We challenge our engineers with the notion that anything less than best-in-class design and performance will simply not get it done, and it's clear with this new engine that they have delivered on that high standard,"

said Steve Menneto, Indian Motorcycle President. "Countless hours were spent in design, development and testing to ensure this is the best liquid-cooled V-twin ever developed, and I could not be prouder of our team and this incredible motor."

There are some characteristics of the Scout motor incorporated into the PowerPlus, including the 60-degree configuration, overhead cam/four valve design. Beyond that, the new engine has been designed around Big Twin performance.

For such a big twin the PowerPlus spins hard, making maximum power at 5500rpm and maximum torque at 3,800rpm and a reline of 6500.



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A TRIALS RETRO

Trials, for you youngsters out there, is a form of motorcycle competition where riders have to negotiate a tough course without putting their feet down or crashing: speed is not relevant.

Now very much a niche sport, Trials is vastly more popular in Europe (in particular Britain) with indoor events which rival Supercross for action.

Simply search Youtube for 'Trials action' and you'll see what I mean.

The Trials heyday, however, was the 1950s and sixties, with riders competing on modified road bikes and tens of thousands of spectators turning up to watch – and that's where the new Royal Enfield Bullet 500 Trials Works Replica

comes in, it's a nostalgic replica of the machines the top-level factory riders rode.

The press release (which we're published in full at roadrider.com.au, it's a gem) says "The Bullet 500 Trial is instantly recognisable by its unique frame colouring, upswept exhaust design, block treaded tyres, headlamp protection grill and solo seat with rear rack. The legendary 500cc single-cylinder powers the Bullet Trial and the reinforced upright handlebars are designed to provide full control from a seated or standing riding position."

The Royal Enfield Bullet 500 Trials Edition is priced at \$9190 (ride away) and includes two years warranty and roadside assistance. **ARR**





THE NEW PIRELLI ANGEL™ GT II JUST AWARDED BEST SPORT TOURING TYRE OF 2019.

Pirelli ANGEL™ GT II wins the comparative test dedicated to Sport Touring tyres carried out by the prestigious Italian magazine Motociclismo.

"The performance of the Pirelli tyres is exceptional, excelling in all the items of our tests and in all categories ... ANGEL™ GT II has managed to mix an excellent riding feeling with record-breaking tread wear"



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POWER IS NOTHING WITHOUT CONTROL

KTM'S HIGH PERFORMANCE 2020



KTM is looking forward to a big 2020 with a new 1290 R Superduke, with more power and less weight, the new 890 Duke R and the small-bore 390 Adventure.

1290 SUPER DUKE R

Described as the edgiest, wildest and most awe-inspiring production bike ever created by KTM, the company's engineers were on a mission to create the ultimate naked bike.

The 2020 Super Duke features a brand new chassis which uses the engine as a stressed member, resulting in massively increased torsional stiffness. There's more cornering clearance and better suspension performance from the new WP Apex shock.

Engine updates include lighter crankcases,





lightweight titanium valves and 56mm throttle bodies.

Electronics include a new generation traction control, revised riding modes, and a new angle-adjustable 5-inch TFT instrument panel.

Brakes, wheels and other components have been lightened to reduce overall weight.

890 DUKE R

KTM have hung the slogan of 'The Super Scalpel' onto the 890 Duke R, the machine takes the 790 Duke (which Australian Road Rider currently has on test, make sure you grab the next issue for that one) and adds more capacity, more revs, more torque, better brakes and reduced weight.

A more high performance option to the versatile 790, the 890 will feature bigger Brembo brakes, a standard single seat cowl, Michelin Hyperports tyres,

higher footpegs, steeper swingarm, WP Apex forks and shock and modern electronics.

390 ADVENTURE

A merger of the 790 Adventure and the 390 Duke engine, this new machine will offer LAMS riders the opportunity to get out there into the trails and outback.

Aimed at riders who don't have off-road experience, adopting the engine from the 390 Duke means easy power delivery with enough performance to have lots of fun.

A trellis frame developed from many years of building enduro and adventure bikes, WP Apex suspension, ABS-equipped brakes, a 14.5 litre fuel capacity and comfortable ergonomics with weather protection should make the 390 Adventure a versatile and practical machine from many riders. **ARR**

Overlooking gorgeous Kotor Bay, Unesco World Heritage, coming down from Lovcen NP in Montenegro. Adriatic Moto Tours ride this road on two of their tours: 15 day Beautiful Balkans Adventure and 18 day Balkans and Adriatic Explorer. Book your next European bike tour with Adriatic Moto Tours – turn to page 104 for more information.



GOVETTS LEAP,
BLUE MOUNTAINS, NSW *(N. Paterson)*
See our feature on page 106-107





NEW GENERATIONS

BY: GEOFF SEDDON

I have quite a few mates who rode road bikes as teenagers and into their 20s, but for one reason or another then gave them away. In many cases, they have maintained a strong interest in motorcycling, particularly motorcycle sport, but rarely enough to take up where they left off.

The gardener is a case in point. Turn the clock back 40 years and he was attacking the roads of Sydney's Eastern Suburbs with the same aggression he took to the waves in Bondi, his weapon of choice a ferocious Honda 750 Four.

Listening to his tales of racing his mates through the narrow streets of Watsons Bay makes me wince, but somehow he survived long enough to give bikes away and become a lunatic in cars instead.

We catch up regularly for morning tea, as semi-retired bad-asses do. The gardener keeps his hand in the game with an angry XY Falcon street car that runs 11-second quarters at the drags, and I still have my motorcycles. He was saying how he'd like to share his passion for cars with his young bloke, but he has zero interest. Thinking back

to his own days on motorcycles, he then said I was probably grateful that none of my kids got involved with bikes.

Underlying the gardener's comment was that motorcycles are inherently dangerous, and if you rode them like he did they probably are. But just as the US gun lobby argues that guns don't kill, it's the people who shoot them you gotta watch, exactly the same could be said for motorbikes. Which is why not everyone should own one, including some of my kids, at least when they were teenagers, for which I am grateful!

Yet the romance of spending quality road time with your children is undeniable. It's always fun sharing any hobby with your kids, and when motorcycles are the biggest things in your life they'll be front and centre in everything else. I have two or three buddies who regularly include their sons in their motorcycling lives. It's not forced – quite the opposite; these young men love the time with their dads. I don't feel jealous but I do feel the bond that's already there made stronger as the kilometres roll past.

For the record, two of my five children have motorcycle licenses but neither ride on the road. The youngest is the keenest but has many interests chasing few dollars. I encourage him because he has the right personality for motorcycles; cautious, risk averse, always chilled. We've had one short ride together – he on a 400 Zephyr he owned briefly and me on my Ducati – and we're both looking forward to doing it again, whenever that is.

The other is my eldest, who took up dirt bikes as something to share with her family. She invited me along one day. Hubby was quick, as you'd expect, and her son was getting faster by the lap. Hubby then lent me his bike, a late-model 250 Enduro, to go out with my daughter on her AG-style dunger. She could really ride and blew me into the weeds! "Dad, why are you surprised?" she asked me later.

So the gene pool continues and I'm happy with that. That none of them wanted to go racing, well I'm extra happy with that too. But if none of the kids showed any interest, I wouldn't be losing sleep. There are more things to my life than motorcycling and we share other interests. Two of my children are into old cars (three if I include in-laws), three play guitar, two ride surfboards and they all know The Beatles' catalogue backwards. There is also the growing number of grandchildren.

Every motorcycle fatality is a tragedy, none more so than a young man or woman with their lives ahead of them leaving grieving parents behind. We've all heard the stories, none are good. The mechanic is another mate who gave bikes away in his early 20s. Forty years later, he still buys all the magazines yet never returned to riding. One day I asked him why. He was laid up in Hornsby Hospital at the time with a badly broken leg from a motorcycle accident, he said,



The *Road Rider* team has stretched across generations – Spencer Leech (opposite page testing the Yamaha R3 for issue #151) helped out Greg when Snaggy was editor, while Damien (above) is the current editor's (Nigel) son and our LAMS tester – he was on L-plates just a couple of years back.

when he received a visit from his mum and dad to inform him his brother had just been killed in another motorcycle accident. Good reason.

Having said that, they were the bad old days (like the gardener's times) when rider training barely existed, there were no restrictions on bike capacity or power for new riders, and the riding test comprised of riding around the

block without losing too much blood. Thousands of young men and hundreds of pillions were slaughtered before we worked out there might be a better way. Having watched my young bloke go through all the rigmarole of getting his Ls in more recent times, I have a lot more confidence in new riders surviving those early kilometres. What happens after that is entirely up to them. **ARR**



AMERICAN MOTORCYCLE MUSCLE

Your editor has a new favourite Harley,
and he's still getting over the shock...

BY: NIGEL PATERSON | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** DAMIEN PATERSON

HARLEY LOW RIDER S

The Harley-Davidson team is busy right now trying to save the company as we know it. Not from going broke — sales are down, but not that far down — but from its past.

For 2021 we'll have the new adventure bike and streetfighter, as well as the electric Livewire machines, machines that really break the Harley-Davidson mould.

Harley is changing because its traditional customers aren't buying bikes like they used to. Baby Boomers are getting seriously old and that's the generation who wanted Harleys — youngsters, like me in my 50s, don't. We want bikes with performance, handling and good looks.

So Harley built the Low Rider S, the only mainstream new model for Australia in 2020, for my generation. It's under 30k, it has a style that reaches back to the 1980s (which is coincidentally when I learnt to ride) and has better performance and handling than just about any Harley before it. While it's not of that new generation, it might be getting pretty close because it's a step up from the bikes which preceded it.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT AN "S"?

So the Low Rider made the switch from a Dyna platform to Softail back in MY2018, a bike which has priced well, looked OK, went OK... it was OK. Gone was the Low Rider S, a better bike but hardly anyone knew it, because the Dyna Low Rider S lasted just a single year in the line-up, then all the Dynas were gone. But with the new Low Rider S, Harley has really lifted its game.

The first thing the Motor Co did was install the stonking 114ci engine. I tested the Road Glide S with this motor recently and liked it, but in the 100kg-lighter Low Rider S, it's a revelation.

At idle it throbs away, visibly shaking various bits and pieces of the motorcycle. Acceleration from the lights is impressive, and it's so easy to launch. At cruising speeds it's smooth, with just a gentle V-twin throb reminding you there's an engine close to two litres in capacity very close to your baby-making parts.

161Nm of torque at just 3000rpm is a heap of fun, a serious heap of fun. You don't need to rev this machine, you just need to twist the throttle for serious drive.





"...HAS BETTER PERFORMANCE AND HANDLING THAN JUST ABOUT ANY HARLEY BEFORE IT"

The beast breathes through a big, beautiful air filter near your right knee, combining it with fuel from a modern EFI system and feeding it into the big pots via four-valve heads. It's all quite modern, but doesn't look it. Harley has made its best-ever engine look traditional, and in this bike its blacked-out finish is very pretty.

STYLE AND GRACE

The performance of the engine carries over to the styling. There's a sporty bikini fairing which provides zero weather protection but makes the bike look faster. The raised motocross-style flat 'bars are aggressive and wide, made to throw the machine through corners.

There are trick magnesium wheels ... well, they aren't really magnesium, but they are painted the right colour ... magnesium wheels were all the rage back in the 1980s, the period in which this design was born. Even the typeface on the tank — outlined and stylised — is classic and delightfully retro.

Californian riders were chopping their Harleys to ride low, back in the day, but not stretching them out or fitting forward controls — that would compromise their ability to get through the canyon roads. Harley decided to build a bike for these riders, and the Low Rider was born.

The new Low Rider S has styling which could be considered a tribute to those machines, and the tradition of mid controls, a single seat and decent handling were priorities.

GOING ROUND THE BEND

Harley's engineers decided to change the rake of the S-model to sharpen up the steering, and it's transformed the bike. Taking just two degrees away — 28 instead of 30 — has really sharpened up the steering.

Combined with the Showa USD front forks, twin discs and the modern Softail rear end, this is the best-handling standard Harley ever. Better than an FXDR with its massive rear tyre, better than any Sportster, in a different league to earlier models, the Low Rider S is good fun to ride along twisty roads.

"THERE ARE NO CREATURE COMFORTS..."

With its weight — 295kg — it's not competitive if you're trying to push hard, but flowing through sweeper after sweeper is a joy. The 19in 110-section front tyre combines well with the 180 rear to provide predictable steering and handling. And you'll be pushing harder than expected to scrape the pegs.

Hauling it down from speed are twin front discs, the S getting an extra rotor over the standard Low Rider. Again, the bike's weight is an issue here — it might have the big brakes, but they do have to work hard.



Love the traditional tank script.



Harley's 114ci motor is a gem.

LOW RIDER S COMPETITION



Indian Chief Dark Horse

With its blacked-out styling, Thunderstroke 111 engine and American build, the Chief is the a little more cruiser and classic style than the Low Rider S, but worth a look. Similar pricing and well built.



Triumph Rocket III

The 2020 Rocket looks incredible. Three cylinders of British grunt, with 221Nm of peak torque, and it's 40kg lighter than the old version. Handling will be helped thanks to the new aluminium frame. The price is unknown yet, but it'll likely be in the ballpark.



Suzuki Intruder M109

The last of the big Japanese muscle bikes, the M109 does everything the Low Rider S can do, for lots and lots less money. But it doesn't do it quite so well, or with the same style...

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"YOU DON'T NEED TO
REV THIS MACHINE, YOU
JUST NEED TO TWIST
THE THROTTLE FOR
SERIOUS DRIVE"







The mid-set controls felt odd when I first jumped on the bike, but after completing a U-turn moments later I was already starting to get it — forward controls would have compromised clearance and control, the mid-set pegs allow conventional riding. The seat is too low to have the pegs any further back — your feet feel like they are too high, at least for a while.

STYLE VERSUS ERGOS

So the style is high at the front thanks to the 'bars sitting on risers, low at the back because it's a Low Rider, which means with the mid controls your arms are stretched out, your arse is close to the ground and your feet and knees initially feel a bit cramped for space.

I got used to it quickly though, soon appreciating the reach to the 'bars, meaning I didn't feel like a windsock, and the mid controls offering a lot more control than having my feet out near the front wheel.



No passengers, at least stock, but at least the rider's perch is comfy.



Mid-set controls aid cornering clearance.



The *Australian Road Rider* test of the bike involved short rides, a couple of full-day rides... but nothing resembling an overnighter or longer. For a start, the styling precludes things like a passenger or luggage. There's only single seat, and there is zero storage on the motorcycle — none, nada, nothing. At least with Harley the accessory catalogue can fix those things.

I found riding all day at highway speeds reasonably relaxing. No, I wasn't getting home and wishing I could go straight back out again, but at least I wasn't riding to my masseuse either.

You're sitting up in the breeze a little, but it's not too stressful; the low seat and high front end combine to punch through the breeze a little. The instruments though, placed on the tank, aren't exactly in your eyeline.

EQUIPMENT AND ELECTRONICS

I recommend you use your Low Rider S to get away from it all. Yes, that is a bit of a cop-out, because even using your phone while riding is a hassle — easy enough to mount on the handlebars, but there's no provision to charge it. No power outlet, no USB outlet, no linking to the instruments... what year is it again?

Then there are the instruments — highly overrated, those things, or at least one Harley designer seems to think so. So he — and I'm sure it would have been a he — put them on the fuel tank where you can't see them, especially the tachometer. Impossible to see if you're wearing a full-face lid without looking almost straight down, something you shouldn't be doing if you need to know your engine speed... The speedo is,

thankfully, easier to see, but Harley is persisting with its tiny idiot lights.

There are no creature comforts like cruise control, heated grips, locking fuel cap, electronic suspension or tyre pressure monitoring, but there is a fob-operated ignition. With no luggage or even a locking fuel cap, the convenience of putting the fob in your jacket and leaving it there actually makes sense — at least until you want to lock the steering, which does require the key.

Like all Softails, the lighting is LED. Unlike some, the round headlight looks great.

I hated the mirrors because they are missing an inch of steel. The stems are so short — I'm sure just to keep them close to the bike and looking stylish — that there's three-fifths of no clearance between my gloves and the bottom of the mirrors.

The stock ones would be wrapped in bubble wrap before I took the bike home and something more functional put in their place, pronto.

IN CONCLUSION...

The Low Rider S is a fantastic machine — good looking, fun to ride, capable and cool. It looks like a cruiser, goes like a muscle bike, handles like a naked. It's my new favourite Harley (Road King... you're dead to me).

It's also completely impractical with its single seat, luggage capacity and lack of modern conveniences.

You can solve some of those problems with a trip through the Harley-Davidson accessory catalogue, although not all of them, and I'm not convinced doing so wouldn't steal some of the bike's character. **ARR**



SPECIFICATIONS

2019 HARLEY-DAVIDSON LOW RIDER S

ENGINE

Type: Air/oil cooled 45-degree V-twin four stroke with four valve per cylinder.

Capacity: 1868cc

Bore x stroke: 102 x 114mm

Compression ratio: 10.5:1

Engine management: Electronic Sequential Port Fuel Injection (ESPFI)

PERFORMANCE

Claimed maximum power: N/A

Claimed maximum torque: 155 Nm at 3,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type: 6-speed

Final drive: Toothed belt

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR

Chassis: Steel cradle, aluminium swingarm.

Front suspension: Showa 43mm upside-down telescopic forks

Rear suspension: Softail, single emulsion shock

Front brakes: 300mm dual discs, 4-piston callipers - ABS

Rear brake: 292mm single disc, 2-piston calliper, - ABS

Tyre front: 110/90B19,62H,BW

Tyre rear: 180/70B16,77H,BW

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Rake: 28°

Trail: 145mm

Claimed curb weight: 308kg

Seat height: 690mm

Wheelbase: 1,545mm

Fuel capacity: 18.9L

ETCETERA

Price: From \$27,885 Ride-a-way

Colours: Vivid Black, Barracuda Silver

Test bike supplied by: Harley-Davidson Australia

Warranty: 2 years, unlimited kilometres





CORRUPT, CAPTIVATING COLOMBIA

Touring Colombia solo is a stupid idea...

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY: IAN LLOYD NEUBAUER



"...CALI IS STILL CALI, A HOTBED OF SALSA AND FORNICATION..."

This story is so messed up I don't know where to begin. How about the part when I was flying down an unlit highway at night, inexplicably lost the "right of way" and came within a whisker of getting T-boned by an oncoming truck? Or the part when my top case came open while I was riding and I lost most of my clothes, toiletries and toolkit — more than \$1000 worth of stuff? Or should I start at the part where Jack and I stepped out for a nightcap to discuss the final leg of our ride to the Amazon? Why not? It's as good a place as any.

We're in Cali. Not Cali as in California, but the Colombian city of Cali, birthplace of the Rodriguez brothers, the narco-traffickers who monopolised the world's cocaine supply in the 1990s and ran their business — the Cali Cartel — like a Fortune 500 company. One-time billionaires, the cartel's founders are now all dead or in jail. But Cali is still Cali, a hotbed of salsa and fornication, and it doesn't take long for trouble to find us.

At 6am we stumble out of a mansion on a ridge overlooking the city — the scene of a mad pool party we ended up at last night. We've got no idea how to get to our hotel apart from walk and from the look of things that will take us all day. Jack is trying to get a signal on his phone to book an Uber while I'm trying to light the end of a Cuban cigar, when out of nowhere a 4WD pulls up and the driver lets us in. Unbelievably, it's the father of the girls we met at a bar last night who randomly invited us up here to party. Colombians are just cool like that; the old man drives us all the way back to the city while entertaining us with stories about Cali's bad old days. "Think this town is fun?" he asks. "You should've seen it when the Rodriguez brothers were in charge," he says. "The party never stopped."

The next thing I am aware of is Jack banging on my door and yelling at me to get out of bed. I look at my watch: midday. Shit. Must have passed out after the old man dropped us off at our hotel.

I toss on my gear and waddle down to the car park with my top case. I'm on a straight-out-of-the-showroom 2018 KTM 1290 Super Adventure S. Jack, a mate from home who married a Colombian girl and now lives here, is riding the Super Adventure's early predecessor — a 2005 KTM 950 Adventure he bought in the city of Medellin, where we started our ride two weeks earlier.

Originally we'd planned to spend only one night in Cali so Jack could get his bike, which had been giving him all sorts of grief, fixed at a genuine KTM workshop. But one day turned into four as we waited and waited for a throttle cable to arrive. And that was after losing two days in Medellin while waiting for an oil filter cover to arrive. We also lost another day when Jack's battery died on the road, and another day while a roadside mechanic dealt with a nagging overheating problem. But now, after having the bike checked from top to bottom by the experts, we're sure Jack's mechanical dramas are over.







It's wishful thinking. We haven't even cleared the city limits when Jack's bike begins overheating and pissing coolant. There's no two ways about it — it has to go back to the shop. Jack throws a leg over and I'm about to follow suit when I see a sugarcane juice stand under a big old tree. It's 30-plus degrees and I'm sweating like a Colombian cocaine dealer, so I say to Jack, "You go get it fixed; it's probably just a split hose. I'm going to chill under that tree. Meet me back here when you're done."

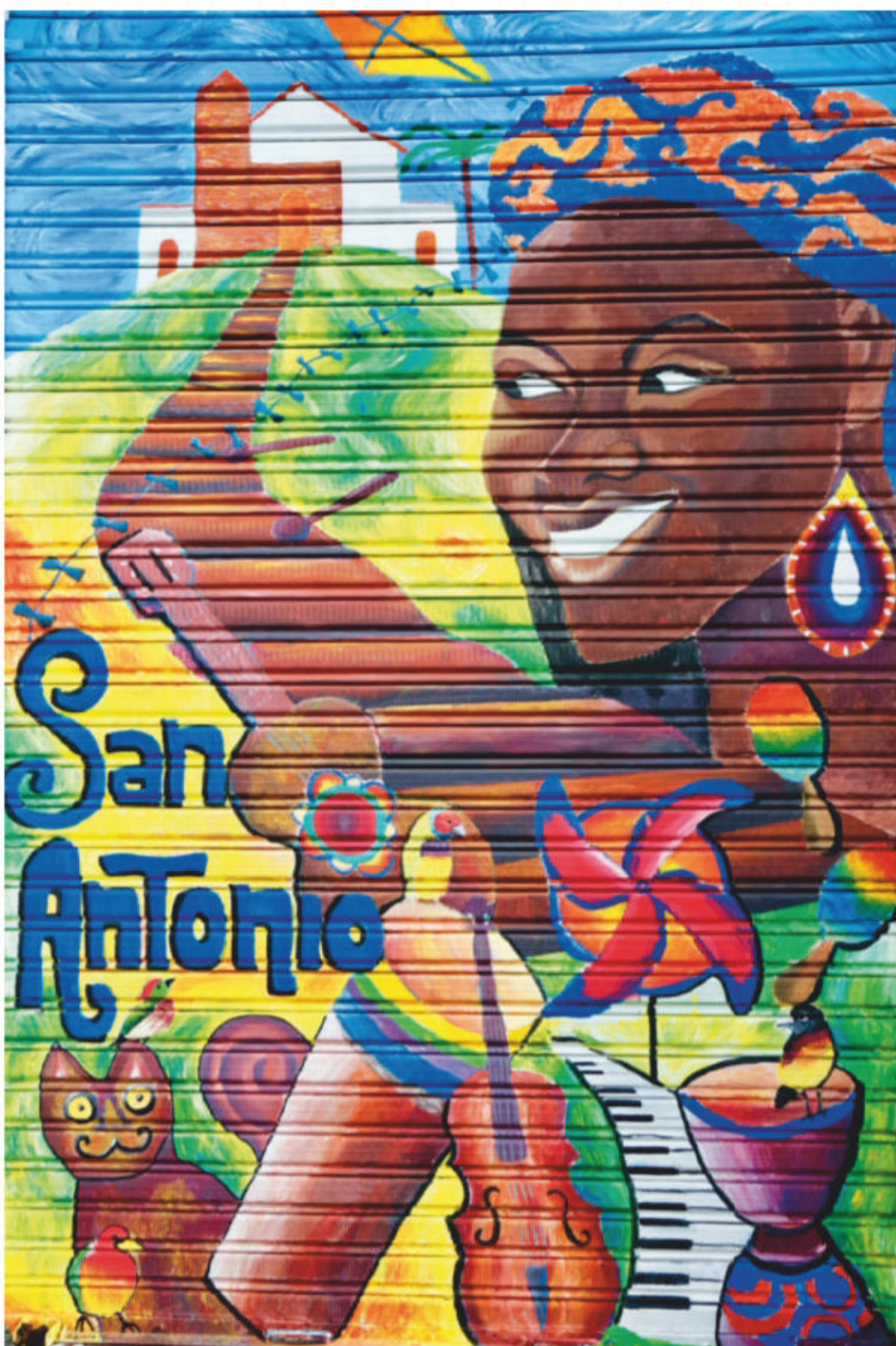
Half an hour later I receive a text. It's Jack and he's got bad news: "You're not going to believe this. The fan is broken. They have to order a new one. It's normally a three-day wait but tomorrow is a public holiday, so it'll be four days. FUCK! I'll have to stay here in Cali and join you on the road whenever I can."

And so I ride off alone. The Amazon is only 600km to the south as the crow flies. But to get there I'll have to cross the Andes mountains and get past El Trampolin de la Muerte — the Trampoline of Death — the most dangerous road in all of Colombia.

PAN-AM HIGHWAY

Whatever guilt I feel for leaving Jack behind is quickly overshadowed by the epic-ness of Colombia's landscape. I'm on the Pan-American Highway — a route that spans 30,000km from Alaska to Patagonia in southern Chile — and this section has some of its best scenery. The two-lane encounter curls around the sheer edges of canyons, bridges over and raging rivers, and punches through mountain passes concealed in





clouds. It's road riding nirvana but with one deadly catch: Colombian drivers. They're psychotic at the best of times, but put them behind the wheel of a heavy vehicle on a highway and they go full Mad Max. Over the next few days, I lose count of how many times I have to swerve into the gutter to avoid being mowed down by buses and trucks that come flying around blind corners or swerve into my lane to avoid potholes.

I ride on until dusk, calling it quits in a little town called Rosas. After parking in the town square, I ask a few locals about where I can stay while they ask me about my bike. How big's the engine? How fast does it go? What's it cost? From giddy teenagers to hillbilly farmers to cashed-up BMW GS riders, everyone is bedazzled by the Super Adventure S. I mean, how many bikes have LED daytime running lights that look like downturned devils' horns, or a bloody flatscreen where the instrument panel normally fits? And instead of a key, it has a radio-activated transponder. Welcome to the world of keyless ignition. One day soon, every motorbike will have this new security feature.

The next morning I take a stroll through Rosas' colourful little market and buy some cornbread and coffee before hitting the road. The further south I ride, the more epic the landscape becomes – mountains piling up on the horizon like stacks of faint blue pancakes. Then, as the Pan-American

"...I'LL HAVE TO CROSS THE ANDES MOUNTAINS AND GET PAST EL TRAMPOLINE DE LA MUERTE – THE TRAMPOLINE OF DEATH – THE MOST DANGEROUS ROAD IN ALL OF COLOMBIA"



pokes through yet another high-altitude pass and into yet another gargantuan valley, I see Galeras, a towering 4276m volcano – the most active volcano in Colombia – and below it, sprawling like white coral in a giant green basin, the city of Pasto. The Trampoline of Death and the Amazon are west of here. But for now, I'm detouring 90km south to Ipiales, the last stop before the Ecuadorian border, to see Las Lajas Sanctuary, a famous 100-year-old basilica chapel that bridges a canyon.

The final section of the Pan-American before Ecuador is the most awesome yet, clinging to the sheer wall of an insanely deep canyon where brutal rock formations reach for the sky. At one especially steep switchback, I look down and nearly suffer vertigo as I see a waterfall tumbling hundreds of metres into a river below. If this road was in Australia, they would market the shit out of it and turn it into a world-famous touring route. But in Colombia, it's just one of thousands of mind-shatteringly scenic roads that no-one much talks about. Add a bunch of colourful colonial towns cut straight out of a Western, cheap food and accommodation, a network of sealed mountain roads intersected by a web of gravel roads and trails and you'll come to understand why after 20 years of riding motorbikes around the world, I now rate Colombia as the best of the best. The roads never end, though they do get interrupted at times by ugly little cities.

Ipiales is ugly as they get. Soon after arriving I find myself stuck in thick traffic on an unlit city street at night – a sitting duck for anyone who wants to rob me. Colombia is nowhere near as dangerous as it was during the Cali Cartel's bad old days. But according to the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, it's still the world's riskiest country on the planet for travel – even more so than Yemen.



"THE TWO-LANE ENCOUNTER
CURLS AROUND THE SHEER
EDGES OF CANYONS, BRIDGES
OVER RAGING RIVERS, AND
PUNCHES THROUGH MOUNTAIN
PASSES CONCEALED IN CLOUDS"

While checking into a hotel, the receptionist warns me not to go outside after 9pm because the city centre gets overrun by junkies and drunks. I see dozens of them from my balcony, moaning like zombies, rattling shop doors and breaking beer bottles in the street. And it's not just here in Ipiales. In Cali, Medellin and cities all over the country, Colombian CBDs become no-go zones after dark. The following morning, while passing money to a shopkeeper through a rattly iron gate that would





make a good prop for a Game of Thrones episode, I ask her why people in Colombia tolerate so much crime. “We don’t like it but what we can do? There’s too much corruption in Colombia. The police and the criminals,” she says, rubbing her two index fingers together, “they’re the same.”

THE AMAZON

The Las Lajas Sanctuary is mind-blowing. Rising like a phoenix from the base of the canyon and connected to an opposing canyon wall by a stone bridge, it looks like something out of a Disney cartoon. But being a Sunday, it’s packed to the rafters with churchgoers so I don’t hang around for very long.

The sprint back to Pasto is even more fun the second time around. Being Sunday, the traffic is light. Sunlight hits the mist pouring off hills and peaks, and it looks like white fire. The scenery is bloody beautiful — I never want this road to end — but when it does end at Pasto and I veer west towards the Amazon, I see something even more beautiful: Colombia’s famous cloud forest — rainforest with persistent low-level clouds. Riding through it is like riding through the sky — an alien world of fluffy white clouds that become thicker and denser and wetter until the road punches a hole through a 3261m-high mountain pass. The clouds part instantaneously to reveal the Valley of Villagarzon — an alpine plain edged by a wave-shaped mountain range hewed from solid stone by a receding glacier millions of years ago. OMG — Colombia is sick!

I grab a late lunch in the village of San Francisco — a hearty meal of bean soup, beef, rice, potatoes, smashed avocado and salad — energy I’ll need to take on the Trampoline of Death. Also known as Adios Mi Vida — Goodbye My Life — this narrow dirt road was built in the 1930s to transport troops through the mountains of southern Colombia.





From San Francisco, it drops like a bomb from 2780m above sea level to 600m at Mocoa on the edge of the Amazon, with more than 100 hairpin turns regularly concealed in fog. The addition of guard rails in the 1990s and the Trampoline's widening to two lanes in some parts have mitigated the annual death toll, though deadly landslides persist. In 1989, about 300 locals died in a terrible collapse near San Francisco. In 2011, landslides killed 500 people in the area.

A billboard at the start of the Trampoline reading "Zona de Avalanches" requires no translation. So I take it easy at first, creeping down one-lane sections that hug sheer granite cliffs and pussy-footing around corners where yellow tape warns me the road is crumbling into the abyss. But with the sun out and 160hp between my legs, the Trampoline of Death turns into a Trampoline of Fun. Soon I find myself scampering up rock gardens, gobbling up corners and splashing through washouts made by little waterfalls that tumble right onto the road.

The next day I wake up in a hotel room in Mocoa and step out onto a balcony. It's only 7am but it's already hot as hell. The air is quite different here: thick and musky. I'm so close to the Amazon I can smell it. I waste no time throwing on my gear and smashing out the final 100km of road to Puerto Asis, a major Amazonian town on the Guamués River.

But as things turn out, riding through the Amazon isn't much fun. The road is dead straight. It's not lined with giant ferns and ancient hardwood species as I'd imagined but with farms, shitty houses and shitty stores. And it's so damn hot I have trouble breathing in my helmet. Hot air blasts my cheeks and nose.

As for Puerto Asis, it's basically the ass end of the world: a bunch of sizzling-hot concrete streets lined with shitty wooden homes that are only half-built because it's so bloody hot nobody can be stuffed finishing anything around here. The riverfront is even shittier. The concrete streets are replaced by mud. In place of the renovated colonial hotel with creaking ceiling fans and cold beer on tap I'd imagined is a smelly old bar buzzing with flies. Three locals sit around a table full of empty beer bottles. One is snoring. The other two look they are melting. Behind them, on a muddy bank, sits a row of shitty wooden boats waiting to take passengers to the next malaria-infested swamp-hole downriver. And you know what else I learned about the Amazon on this trip? There's fuck all to do here! My Katie Em hasn't even cooled down when I throw a leg over and tear out of town. **ARR**

"...IT DROPS LIKE A BOMB FROM 2780M ABOVE SEA LEVEL TO 600M AT MOCOA ON THE EDGE OF THE AMAZON, WITH MORE THAN 100 HAIRPIN TURNS REGULARLY CONCEALED IN FOG"



WANNA GO?

- LATAM has daily flights from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to Medellin in Colombia starting from around \$2000. See Latam.com
- Hotel Habana Vieja is a Cuban-style hotel in Medellin's trendy El Poblado district with 12 ensuite rooms and restaurant. Rates are \$65 for singles or \$72 for double occupancy with breakfast. See hotellahabanaviejamedellin.com.
- Medellin Scooter Rentals in Medellin has a pair of BMW F700 GS that rent for \$200 per day. See medellinscooterrentals.com. Ask for Santiago.

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TIME TRAVELLER

From its bevel-driven cam to the drop 'bars to the crossply tyres and more, nothing is as truly retro as the W800 cafe

TEST BY: PHIL JAMES | PHOTOGRAPHY: NIGEL PATERSON

With the W800 Cafe, Kawasaki has successfully built a machine that doesn't just have retro styling, it is also about as close to its 1960s W series 650cc twin as possible – within the constraints imposed by the modern world. Kawasaki is offering a full retro experience.

During my time with the bike, I'd fire it up and let it idle while I suited up. It would sit there idling, the whine from the bevel-driven valve train providing treble to balance the bass burble from the iconic peashooter exhausts. I'd listen and feel a sense of anticipation for the ride ahead – excitement even.

Doing so created an emotional connection with the bike, making it far more than just transportation.

TRULY RETRO...

Given it's not trying to be a modern design, it would be unfair to judge the W800 Cafe as a modern bike. It would be like criticising a Morris Minor for falling short of a Toyota Yaris. Best of all, by using modern materials, production techniques and quality control, the less endearing traits of classic bikes are avoided. At the time, the British couldn't even keep oil in the engine and Lucas electrics were deemed to be the work of "The Prince of Darkness".

We're not in the 1960s now, so how does it work today? The homage paid to the air-cooled twin theme is on the mark. Details like the footpegs, seat, exhaust and twin clock instruments are spot on. Its styling works too, as it passed the acid test: my 23-year-old daughter thinks it looks "very cool". Possibly cool enough to make its rider look cool. That's one job done.

I think it looks terrific, although the "I couldn't afford to paint it" nose fairing is a bit too 1960s authentic and would be better if it were colour matched to the rest of the bike.

Riding the machine was initially an underwhelming experience, but by the time I'd run it through a tank of gas it had won me over completely. Provided you stay within its design envelope it's great fun to ride. It's important to remember it's an interpretation of a 1960s cafe racer, which doesn't make it a sports bike today. Try riding it quickly through corners and it could scare you (again... 1960s authentic). It's not frame flex, as it's engineered to look period, with modern strength. It's more a case of the of old-style tyres and limited cornering clearance coming together to discourage serious corner speed. The suspension looks old school and to some degree it is, but it rides nicely and it's better than anything ever fitted to a 1960s bike. Handling wise it's not hopeless, but it's not modern either.







THE 1960s WORLD

To understand the W800 Cafe, we need to go back to the 1960s for some context. Sadly, I remember it well.

Roads in the 1960s were mostly two lanes, with broken centre lines on every straight (unlike today). “The Wrap Everybody in Cotton Wool” brigade hadn’t yet morphed into the all-powerful, self-serving, nanny state we have today. Speed limits were simple (we need to go pre-metric here). Built-up areas were 35 and 45mph. The highway limit was typically 60mph, but... and the young will be astonished here... many roads were “unrestricted”!

There was no speed limit. There’s a famous picture taken by *Wheels* magazine on the Hume Highway in a Falcon GT HO – with 140mph (230km/h) showing on the speedo. (With drum rear brakes, rigid rear axle and leaf spring suspension no less...) Despite this, it wasn’t a free-for-all; you were required to drive to the conditions. Police would book road users for “dangerous driving” if they were putting others at risk (as it should be).

Most cars and bikes of the time didn’t have much power (before V8s arrived in 1967 anyway), and they certainly

didn’t corner or stop (Jaguars being the exception). Typical highway cruising was done at 50 to 60mph (much like now), but if the road was unrestricted and conditions good, you could take your machine to its limit... and be within the law. Does anybody have a Tardis? I want to go back...

At the time; performance was defined by a machine’s top speed. Anything that could do 100mph (the legendary “ton”) was considered fast. Apart from Minis and Jaguars, nothing cornered either; as far as bikes went; there was nothing you could do about this. Therefore, the focus was on going fast, not going around corners.

Riders who today might fixate on track-day lap times would fixate on the highest speed they could get from their machines. Why not? It was legal and with the bikes available at the time, not very fast anyway. The only easy way to improve top speed was to lift the gearing, fit low bars, possibly a fibreglass nose fairing, then lie on the tank as you held the throttle to its stop. Nowadays, doing 100mph is dead-easy but fatal for your licence. Back in the day riders needed sperm whale balls (or ovaries) to keep the evil handling machines pinned as the speedo crept ever closer the magic 100mph... (while

wearing a pudding basin helmet, fur-lined flying boots and bomber jacket). Just to illustrate how much things have changed, at the time, the term “speed wobble” was a regular feature of rider conversations. Maybe I don’t need that Tardis after all.

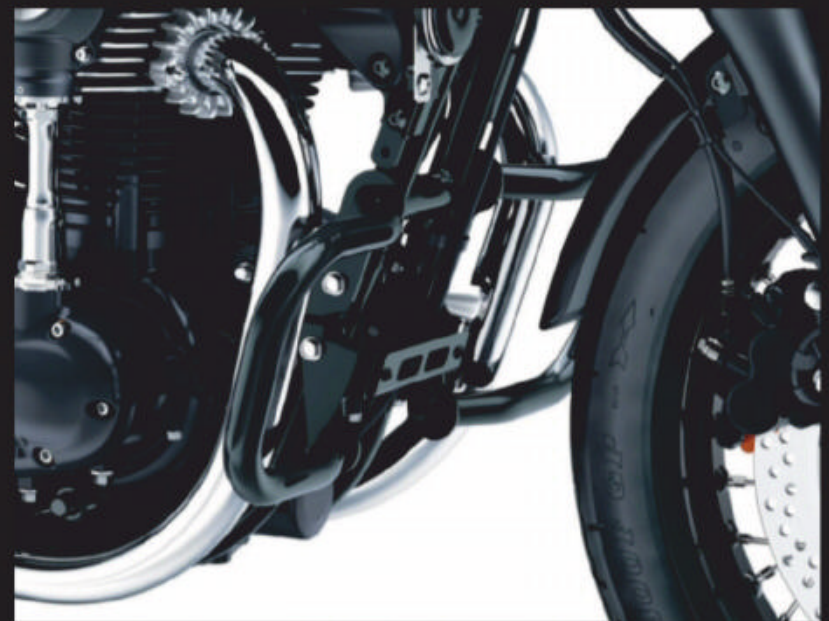
In this world, the Kawasaki W800 Cafe is a perfect fit. If you presented it to a rider in the 1960s he would instantly be familiar with it, yet stunned by its power and brakes, gobsmacked that it doesn’t leak oil, the lights worked and it has electric start (and no “speed wobbles” either). By 1960s standards it’s a superbike. Kawasaki would have ruled the bike universe if this bike was available in the 1960s. The company did that later in the decade by the way, with the hinged frame, grenade H1 500cc Mach III, followed by the nuclear H2 750 Mach IV and finally... the mighty Z1 900cc Super Four, which (with the Honda CB750) ushered in the modern age of bikes. These bikes also marked the beginning of the end of the “Ton-Up” era. 100mph was now easily achieved by standard machines, at about the same time unrestricted speed zones fell victim to the fast-growing nanny state. It was a memorable period for motorcycling and the W800 honours it perfectly.

Here's the thing — this old school design and performance really is part of the bike's charm. If the rider has a good skill set, the cafe can be punted along at a brisk pace. On public roads, it has a limit you can actually get to (unlike virtually every other large-capacity bike currently on the market). It's hugely satisfying to know you've personally got the most it has to offer too. It feels fast without being fast. When the chassis dynamics and engine noise come together, it really is like riding in the '50s or '60s... great fun.

THE DETAILS

While it's based on the W800, it has quite a few upgrades. Kawasaki has stayed faithful to the retro design brief; it's the sort of stuff manufacturers may have done back in the day (excluding ABS fitment, which is becoming compulsory in some markets). It's more performance orientated than the W800, in a period sympathetic way. Apart from the obvious styling changes, there's a smaller 18in front wheel, wider alloy rims, increased front fork diameter (up from 39 to 41), stronger lower triple clamp, stiffer springing, larger brakes with ABS and a stronger frame.

The engine looks and feels old, but is anything but. There's good power (it's an 800cc, four-valve twin after all) and it runs through the gears to its redline with enthusiasm. It has that beautiful bevel drive, a balance shaft, five speeds in the gearbox and an assist/slipper clutch. One concession to the 21st century is fuel injection and it's good, with a nice on/off throttle transition and a flat-spot free experience. The low 8.4:1 compression ratio allows a period-correct, slow 1350rpm idle... and it would probably run on beer. My favourite quirk is that when it's turned off, the low compression ratio and heavy flywheel allow the engine to roll for a few revolutions before it stops... with a chuff, chuff... chuff... sound. How retro is that!



"... AN EMOTIONAL
CONNECTION
WITH THE BIKE"





"...IT HAS A LIMIT YOU
CAN ACTUALLY GET TO..."





"...BY THE TIME I'D RUN IT THROUGH A TANK OF GAS IT HAD WON ME OVER COMPLETELY"

Some things are best left in the '60s and drum brakes are one of them. If you've not experienced worn drum brakes, you should count your blessings. The problem was that as the brake shoe wears, its contact patch diminishes and before long they just don't work. Drums are also prone to overheating and brake fade. If the brakes were in good condition, you might get one good stop every few minutes.

Fitting period drum brakes to the W800 was a line Kawasaki just couldn't cross. That said, although improved from the W800, the brake package isn't Supersport either. The front is a twin-piston calliper on a 320mm disc, but there's only one. The rear is a largish, twin-piston calliper on a 270mm disc. My initial

impression of the brakes wasn't good. The problem, as it turns out, was my technique, not the bike. For decent retardation, what you need to do (...and I can't believe I'm about to say this...) is stand on the back brake hard and trust the ABS to look after you. It works because the single front disc doesn't unweight the rear as much as twin discs would. The rear brake is, therefore, more effective than normal. Initially, I thought the brakes were a C minus, but now I'll mark them as a B plus and that's ok on this bike.

I do have a suggestion for the brakes just the same. They could be cooler and more "period" if two grooved (not drilled) discs were fitted at the front. This was an upgrade that was available in the era and very "trick" at the time. A less noticeable, smaller rear disc would help nail it style-wise.

PERIOD ERGOS...

On first inspection, the bike's ergonomic package looked like style may have trumped functionality. Could this be a 20-minute bike? Happily, in this case I can report looks are deceiving. For city riding it was quite

good, and I wasn't expecting that. The rider's triangle is comfortable, weight on the wrists is acceptable and the knee angle open enough, although your 185cm tall editor wasn't as happy as I. Most riders won't get premature leg fatigue. At higher speeds, it provided just the right amount of forward lean — giving some support from the wind, not so much that wrist pain develops. The seat could be a bit narrow for some. I thought it might annoy me, but it didn't.

The steering has a different feel. Twenty minutes into the familiarisation ride I started to think, "What's going on with this steering?" Perusing the steering geometry and wheelbase specs didn't reveal anything too radical. Then I figured it out. The 'bars place the rider's hands just in front of the steering stem (I can't think of another OEM set-up where this is the case). This gives a subtly different feel. You acclimatise quickly enough, but it's worth noting because a rider may think it's a flaw. It isn't — it's just different.

The initial feeling from the cross-ply, retro pattern tyres was sketchy — a bit too far down the same road as drum brakes as it were. The grip level was low, "tram lining" was an issue. "Surely Kawasaki wouldn't allow this — I must be missing something," I thought. Time to consult my tyre Guru Jamie Stubbs (Sportcycles, my local workshop).

He suggested the tyres may have too much pressure and pointed out that cross-ply tyres have stiffer sidewalls than radials and run at lower pressures. Over-pressurising the tyre reduces their pliability and ability to deform into the road surface. The recommended tyre pressures are front 28psi, rear 32psi. Dropping to those pressures made a huge difference: the tram lining stopped, the tyres had some "bite", the whole bike felt more planted. The ride was more compliant too. Glad I got to the bottom of that.

GENUINE VIBES...

One characteristic which every rider will note is the "authentic" vibration from the engine (a consequence of the authentic firing order and beautiful noise it makes). Kawasaki has fitted a balance shaft, and this is a good thing. Nothing kills riding pleasure faster than vibration. Every rider has a different tolerance to it and to be faithful to the retro design, Kawasaki needed to maintain enough vibration for "character", but not so much to be annoying. A tricky task. For me, they haven't quite got it right. At engine speeds up to 3000rpm (around 90km/h) it's perfect. A pleasant pulse. There's a peak between 3000 to 4000rpm range equating 100km/h which is best avoided for sustained periods. Above 4000rpm it smooths out again, which correlates to the maximum licence-friendly speed you can do on a motorway.

As an owner, if vibration becomes an issue, fitting bar end weights (there aren't any on the bike) and going up a tooth on the countershaft sprocket might help a lot. I do think there's an opportunity for improvement here for Kawasaki, perhaps by tweaking the engine and using rubber to further isolate the rider.





The gearbox and clutch are very 21st century and this is a joy. The five-speed gearbox is slick-shifting, the assist and slipper clutch has a light action and works a treat.

WHO IS IT FOR?

What we have in this bike is a mix of capabilities that make it the perfect tool for some, and totally wrong for others. If you love the vintage look and feel, if you want to transport yourself back to the '60s, if you are a vintage bike collector and want something that won't give you "box trailer" moments, if you enjoy the retro café scene, want something different, or just want an easy bike to get around on, then you'll love this bike. As sedate cruising is one of the W800's core strengths, those with a propensity to collect demerit points might find some value in it too.

However, if you want retro styling with modern chassis performance, regularly ride with faster bikes, commute on the highway or want to do overnight touring, then other bikes will be better solutions.

As it comes it's a fine machine, but if I owned this bike, I'd definitely want to do something about the vibration

and bolt-on some better shocks. The stock ones are OK, but in my part of the world the roads are crap — and I'd probably look to helping it breathe better.

The engine makes nice solid power, but if you want to really embrace your inner café racer, Sportcycles showed me a dyno chart of a W800 fitted with a Staintune exhaust and Power Commander ignition that had gained 20 per cent more power... Jamie tells me it ran smoother as well.

THE MOST FAITHFUL RETRO?

The W800 Cafe is a really interesting bike. The upgrades it has on the W800 make it a genuine period café racer in my book. While it does have solid competitors in the Royal Enfield 650 Continental GT and Triumph T100, both run 270-degree cranks. The W800, with its 360-degree crank, is arguably the one truest to the 1960s "go fast" twin concept. It's also the rarest (and possibly coolest) in its category.

Kawasaki has gotten it seriously right with this bike: possibly the best "classic" twin ever made (even if it isn't British). **ARR**

KAWASAKI'S AIR-COOLED TWIN HERITAGE

Kawasaki's classic air-cooled, 360-degree crank engine has roots going all the way back to the early '50s, to a 500cc twin produced by a company called Meguro. Meguro was absorbed by Kawasaki in 1964 and the bike came along with the deal. Kawasaki initially sold an upgraded 500cc version called the K2 and in 1965 the W1 650cc version was released. Conceptually it was heavily influenced by the British Twins of the day, however it was its own unique design and not a straight copy.

1967 saw an additional carburettor added and power increased from 47 to 53hp. A lot for the time. In 1968 the bike range split into two different model variants — the sportier W2 SS (spiritual ancestor of the W800 Cafe), and a Street Scrambler version (W2 TT), with left-side, high-mount twin mufflers. Given retro scramblers are becoming fashionable again and Kawasaki has history in the back catalogue, a W800 scrambler variant would likely be welcomed by the market.

In 1971 the bike broke from the British format and aligned with the rest of the world when the foot brake and gear levers were moved to opposite sides. The final variant was fitted with dual front disc brakes in 1973 and to my eye, it was one of the prettiest bikes of the era. Production ended in 1974. The rebirth of the classic twin concept was in 1999 when the bevel drive W650 was released.



SPECIFICATIONS

2019 KAWASAKI W800 CAFE (EJ8000CKF)

ENGINE

Type: Air-cooled, 4-stroke vertical twin.
SOHC 8 valve, bevel drive

Capacity: 773cm³

Bore x stroke: 77.0 x 83.0mm

Compression ratio: 8.4:1

Engine management: DFI 2 x 34mm
with sub throttles

Ignition: TCBI with digital advance

PERFORMANCE

Claimed maximum power:

35kW @ 6000rpm

Claimed maximum torque:

62.9Nm @ 4800rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type: 5-speed with positive neutral finder

Final drive: Chain

Clutch: Assist and slipper multiplate
wet clutch

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR

Chassis: Tubular double-cradle

Front suspension: 41mm telescopic
fork. 130mm travel

Rear suspension: Twin rear shock
with 5-way adjustable spring preload.
107mm travel

Front brakes: 320mm diameter single
disc with twin-piston caliper, ABS

Rear brake: 270mm diameter single
disc with twin-piston caliper, ABS

Tyres: Front: 100/90-18M/C 57H.
Rear: 130/80-18M/C 66H

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Rake: 26°

Trail: 94mm

Claimed wet weight: 223kg

Seat height: 790mm

Wheelbase: 1465mm

Fuel capacity: 15 litres

ETCETERA

Price: From \$15,385 ride-away in NSW

Colours: Metallic Magnesium Gray with
Galaxy Silver

Test bike supplied by: Kawasaki Australia

Warranty: 2 years, unlimited kilometres

FOLLOWING THE MIGHTY MURRAY

It was exploited for trade, fish and irrigation, helping make Australia what it is today...

WORDS & PIX: BRIAN RIX

Anyone else like me remember reading the adventures of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer? Their adventures rafting the length of the mighty Mississippi River caused many to daydream of emulating them.

Over the years, my continuing love affair with all things motorised on two wheels took over, but I've always had a yearning to travel the Murray River from its fledgling springs in the mountains of New South Wales to its escape into the ocean at Goolwa in South Australia.

After patting the bride on the head, "Big Red" and I head off on another adventure to ride the Murray River roads as best we can. A chance phone call with a good friend at a loose end for a few days saw me meet up with Cam, aka Cudge, in Mansfield for a quick run over some of the best motorcycling roads for an overnigher at Khancoban in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains. Track closures and rough four-wheel tracks meant we couldn't make it to the very source of the mighty Murray, so we compromised and decided to ride the twisty and scenic Snowy Mountains Highway. Bugger, the things you have to do!

Up bright and early, we head off upstream. First thing in the morning is danger time for motorcyclists on this stretch of road. Wallabies, wombats and kangaroos are out and about with plenty of carcasses lying around as warnings.

Recent rains have caused rockslides, cutting the road in places. Work gangs are feverishly trying to fix it. We're held up for 15 minutes at one site so chew the fat with the stop/go man. As many of you know, there are great spots to camp at Gehi but we decide to explore off-road on the southern side of the river and find even more kangaroos lolling around and commit a few spots to memory for later camping expeditions.

Cruising past Tom Groggin, where the barriers are set to block the road if the snowfalls are too dangerous, we find more great camping spots. Before heading up the hills towards Thredbo Village, we turn off onto a track that takes us down to the beautiful upper reaches of the Murray. A rough river crossing has been blocked off by the National Parks Authority so this is as far as we can go. I take in the peace and quiet of the Australian bush before man handling Big Red around and back track out of the steep gorge. Cudge and I both love this, cruising on very capable adventure bikes, not frightened to take some of the little side tracks with occasional rocky climbs. Adventure bikes have their limitations, but they can certainly take you beyond the bitumen.

Taking the better part of all morning, we've had a blast just cruising the Snowy Mountains Highway back to Khancoban. A quick look at the maps sees us head downstream to the Victorian/ New South Wales border, taking the well-formed







"ADVENTURE BIKES HAVE THEIR LIMITATIONS, BUT THEY CAN CERTAINLY TAKE YOU BEYOND THE BITUMEN"

gravel Towong Hill Road before we turn onto the C546, better known as the Murray River Road. We only travel as far as Tintaldra, the motorcyclists' old favourite haunt. Unfortunately, the pub is closed and up for sale again. Thirsty, we move on across into convict country, aka New South Wales (sorry Ed, couldn't help myself).

Taking the turn-off to Welaregang we hit the dirt of the River Road and have a ball stretching the abilities of a heavily loaded adventure bike on the twists and tight turns, and blast down the long open straights raising plenty of dust. For the crotch-rocket boys and girls, this road is not for you.

The rewards are deserted roads and fantastic views. Riding the back way into Jingellic, past the pub and bulging campground leaves two dusty riders wanting more. So it's more of the same on the dirt River Road for another hour or so to the Wymah Ferry Terminal. With no need to pay the ferry man, we head over the river and back onto the Murray



River Road to the Granya pub. Meeting Mick the publican, it's sad to hear that another old bikers' haunt is also up for sale. Let's hope someone takes it on. Whetting the whistle, it's a quick sprint down river to Bethanga to look for a bed for the night. The new publican announces that they no longer have rooms and they're not doing meals tonight. Damn. Oh well, more dirt riding and we head to Tallangatta via old



Tallangatta. Our maps don't show a road, but the locals direct us and it's a beauty. Just on sunset we roll into the welcoming Tallangatta pub just off the Murray Valley Highway. We've only covered around 350km for the day but had a ball.

Tallangatta is a very bike-friendly town. Everyone from the publican to the cafe owner and petrol station owners love the bike people. Long may that continue. We decide to trundle down the Murray Valley Highway and turn off to Bonegilla and the Hume Weir. Riding past the old migrant camp, I make a mental note to visit that one day. At the Hume Weir you really get a sense of the huge volume of life-giving water that flows down the mighty Murray.

We trickle through the back streets of Albury and out the Riverina Highway to Howlong for a coffee at the well-supported bakery. We chat with some Ulysses riders from Wagga taking in the beautiful burst of sunshine. Cudge and I again venture back into Victoria across the 11 bridges towards Rutherglen on the Murray Valley Highway. This is wine country. Pity the panniers are full.

Yet another river crossing at Wahgunyah and then into Corowa sees us riding beside Lake Mulwala and yet another crossing to linger a little longer in Yarrawonga for a lunch of local cheeses, while overlooking the lake. Hightailing it to Cobram and then on to Tocumwal, we're intent on imposing ourselves on another old friend who has a property right on the Murray. Pulling into Phil's driveway with a huge thirst, we're parking the bikes on his lawn when



I hear a crash and find Cudge's bike having a "rest". My mate is rolling around in agony. Putting the bike on the centrestand, he snapped his Achilles tendon and went down like a shot fox. Rather than quenching a thirst, it's in Phil's tin top and off to Cobram hospital. Bugger. My good riding buddy is out of action for a while.

There are several different routes to take to get from Tocumwal to Echuca. The NSW side has a pleasant dirt road leading to Picnic Point and then south to Moama,

whereas the Victorian side is all tar with a couple of shortcuts leading off it. Either way, riding into a setting sun here can be problematic.

From Echuca there's an option of the more desolate road over the old bridge to Moama then down river, or my choice, taking the Murray Valley Highway to Gunbower then turn off for the pretty ride on Gunbower Island to Cohuna. From there it's a straight flat run to Kerang. Take note of the 80km/h signs at rail crossings. There was a terrible truck vs train out here not that long ago.

You'll know when you've left the lush green upper Murray and are heading into dry semi-arid broad acre farmlands, occasionally interspersed with lakes with rather inappropriate names like Lake Charm. Lake Boga has an interesting past. It was the site for the Catalina flying boats during WWII. If you're interested, there's a small museum. It's only a short distance from Swan Hill where there's a good caravan park right on the river next to the old single-lane lift bridge.

Again there are options here. Cross over to NSW towards Moulamein and head downstream on the dirt, or keep cruising on the Murray Valley Highway. I take the highway where there's good wild camping spots right on the river near Wood Wood and Boundary Bend, with services in both small towns. Riding further along the highway, it's not long before I reach the irrigation settlement of Robinvale where fruit trees and vineyards thrive in the rich soil. All it needs is the water.

"... ACROSS THE 11 BRIDGES TOWARDS RUTHERGLEN ON THE MURRAY VALLEY HIGHWAY"

Robinvale has done away with its old lift bridge for a far more efficient two-way structure. Again, off to the left or downstream, there's good camping spots on the river.

The shortest way to Mildura is crossing over to Euston in NSW and taking the Silver City Highway. NSW Highway Patrol tries the shadow tactics on the sole biker for about 20km.

Mildura is the sprawling irrigation settlement set up by the Chaffey Brothers based on Californian irrigation systems that they brought here near the turn of the 20th century. The small townships of Red Cliffs, Irymple and Merbein sprung up. Pumping stations moved the water to fertile land. The river was tamed to a navigable course with a series of locks and weirs that stretch from Mulwala to the sea. Paddle steamers conveyed barges full of produce the length of the Murray and some distance up the Darling River.

Today the old workhorses are long gone, but a few tourist versions remain to provide a glimpse of the past. This is my home country, so I know it well. If you're adventurous, take the dirt road to Mungo Station where ancient remains were found. Last time I travelled it was okay for adventure bikes and there's camping there. It gives an insight into the inland sea and lakes that supported life eons ago.

A must-see is the confluence of the Murray and Darling Rivers at Wentworth. At Curlwaa there's still an operating single-lane lift bridge, but it's been







"...LEGENDS OF THE
SPORT LEARNT THEIR
TRADE. NAMES LIKE
CRUMP, LYONS,
MCGOWAN AND
SEDGEMAN ..."



modernised with traffic lights at each end. As a young rider, it was always "interesting" with semis and grey nomads coming the other way.

The river is wide and lazy here, ideal for houseboats and water skiers. If you're in Mildura on a summer Sunday night, take in the motorcycle speedway. This is where legends of the sport learnt their trade. Names like Crump, Lyons, McGowan and Sedgeman eventually went over to Europe and competed in world competitions. Today's young guns may be running around on any Sunday night at the Mildura speedway.

Mildura to Renmark again has two alternatives. The 120-odd kays of dirt from Wentworth via Lake Victoria, or the shorter run on the Victorian side. If time is a problem, take the asphalt to the SA border on the Victorian side, but don't carry fruit as it will be confiscated at the border.

On the way take a look at Lake Cullulleraine for a semi-secluded grassed camping spot with facilities, or keep cruising through the Mallee wheat belt. Watch for 'roos out here. The dry is causing them to come in to eat what little crops the farmers have sown this year. I've never seen it drier, with sand drifts right up to the edge of the road and fences half covered by sand.



"THE REWARDS ARE
DESERTED ROADS AND
FANTASTIC VIEWS"





After the border, the narrow two-way old bridge at Paringa is a feature. The railway line that used to run down the middle has been turned into a walkway.

Renmark — pelicans, paddle boats and pensioners. Pelicans on the foreshore swimming around paddle boats on the broad river is pleasant, but beware of the pensioners disgorged from bus tours elbowing you out of the way at the local bakery.

The Gwyder Highway towards Burra will take you north towards Morgan, where the river leaves the semi-arid scrub of the encroaching outback and turns south. Old man river really makes a presence in this landscape, cutting deep into the earth to create clifftops with great views. Stop and take it in. You'll see small settlements, great areas to wild camp and vistas of the river meandering south. Mind the wind, though. It blows a gale out here sometimes.

I backtracked to the ferry crossing at Waikerie then turned off the highway at Blanchetown, heading south on the Stott Highway. There are glimpses of the Murray as the landscape changes from desolate scrub to tilled fields of green and yellow.

Murray Bridge is a substantial town with its wharf for working paddle steamers from another era. There's a derrick, old steam train and paddle steamer as an indication of how trade was back then. Nowadays the new bridge takes most traffic whisking past Murray Bridge out of sight, but the old bridges are still there. Take the time to venture into town.

Next it's onto the Princes Highway towards Tailem Bend before turning off to Wellington and another ferry crossing. This one has been operating since 1839, has sunk a few times but was the main land route to Adelaide from the east. The pub has a good history of the area on a display wall.

Riding the last 80 odd kilometres down the Fleurieu Peninsula to Goolwa takes in rolling hills, green fields, wine regions and finally, the pretty town of Goolwa. From here ride over the bridge to Hindmarsh Island and follow the signs to the windswept mouth of the Murray.

You can't miss the mouth, where dredges are used regularly to allow the waters of the mighty Murray to finally reach the Great Southern Ocean. **ARR**



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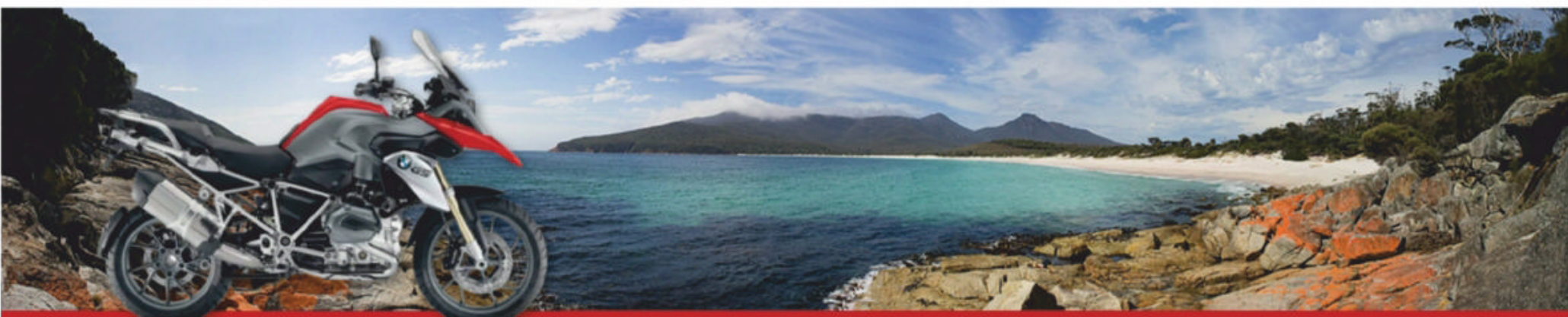
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COUNTRY
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DURATION
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ROUTE LENGTH
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(1,200 - 1,700 miles)



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OLD-FASHIONED ADVENTURE

Retro styling, modern tech, moderate output ...

TEST BY: RAY MACARTHUR | PHOTOGRAPHY: NIGEL PATERSON

Twin-cylinder adventure bikes have had a tendency to grow. They started out decades ago around 800cc before evolving into the heavyweight 1200s and 1250s produced by a growing spread of manufacturers.

Along the way there have been smaller bikes introduced, but in many ways these are hard-core off-road or high-tech machines, similar in capacity to the earliest adventure twins, but aimed at a different rider.

Moto Guzzi's V85TT is different. It's a mid-sized, retro-styled yet modern motorcycle built to carry a load and cover distance in comfort and still provide some off-road capability.

NOT GUZZI'S FIRST RODEO

Moto Guzzi has a long but not-so-well-known history with adventure bikes, dating back as far as the 1970s with its TTs, Quota and NTX models. None of these was particularly successful... maybe the V85 will be, because it's not going head-to-head with the big-bore BMWs and KTMs.

Certainly the current crop of Moto Guzzi retro-inspired machines has been popular and BMW is doing well with its heritage range — Moto Guzzi obviously hopes to capture the imagination of those looking for something a bit

different. The retro cues abound, from the shape of the tank to the shape of the headlight to the minimalist bodywork and tubular steel frame.

Of course, a transverse V-twin is very different from everything else out there, with only Honda producing a transverse twin in any numbers with its CX500 and 650 in the 1970s and '80s other than Moto Guzzi.

The example tested here has what Moto Guzzi calls "Evocative Graphics", which are yellow and white with a red frame that definitely evokes comment. The other "evocative" colour scheme is red and white with a red frame, or there are the traditional solid colours of red, blue or grey for those who prefer your bike less "evocative".

DESIGNED FOR ADVENTURES

Many new bikes languish on showroom floors because potential buyers see a flaw in the machine's execution. For adventure riders it might be too small a fuel tank, sub-standard rider or passenger comfort, too much weight, a lack of accessories or a perception of fragility.

Now, Moto Guzzi's engineers appear to have considered this and squarely aimed the new bike at riders looking for moderate weight, size, capacity, horsepower, range, capability and, importantly, price.







The single rear shock mounts to the right hand side of the driveshaft/swingarm.



The engine is an updated version of what we've been getting from Moto Guzzi for decades.

Riders of high-tech, long-range, extreme-terrain and high-performance machines won't likely be interested in the V85TT — and that's because it's not for them. Nothing wrong with that — many buyers of the V85 would not consider a 260kg monster with a 30-litre tank, or a 160HP motorcycle or something that costs \$30K. What you do get with the V85TT is a 23-litre fuel tank that should provide a range of up to 450km, very respectable for a country like ours. For many people, 80hp is enough. And lots of riders aren't interested in smashing down single tracks and crossing waist-deep rivers...

The high front mudguard and black-rimmed spoked wheels are "ready for adventure" and much more durable than cast alloy wheels, which are light weight but much less able to take a flogging off-road. This is very relevant when the bike and rider weigh over 300kg and even more with luggage.

What I did find a little curious is why they chose to fit tubes instead of tubeless tyres on a bike of this size. In my opinion, a tubeless tyre might have been more appropriate considering the (208 dry) 230kg wet weight and amount of road riding this bike is most likely to do. If using tubes I would have liked to have seen case clamps (aka rim locks) to prevent a tyre slipping on the

rim, which can tear a valve out of the tube, something I've painfully experienced. There is a lot to be said for the safety, durability and repairability of a modern tubeless tyre matched to a strong spoked wheel.

The wheels and tyres are 19in 110/80 at the front and 17in 150/70 at the rear, a common combination in this largely road and partly dirt adventure segment. Tyres on this Evocative model are the Michelin Anakee, with the more "road-going" Metzeler Tourance fitted to the standard versions.

The brakes up front were strong and effortless, fitted with double-floating 320mm discs with a pair of Brembo four-piston callipers up front and a 260mm disc and floating twin piston calliper on the rear. The suspension travel feels firm but supple enough to deal with bitumen, bad sealed roads, gravel and through the forests... it's not designed to be smashed through single-track enduro loops and will struggle in really tough terrain, but you'd be taking the bike way outside of its design brief. The front upside-down telescopic forks have 170mm of travel with adjustable spring preload and rebound adjustment. There is spring preload and rebound adjustment on the 170mm travel rear shock spring by rotating a cam ring around the shock body so you can adjust for luggage or weight on the back. It would have been good to see hydraulic preload adjustment, but alas we don't get that.

CLASSICALLY AIR-COOLED

The V85TT feels very smooth, solid, well built, and mechanically very quiet and civilised, with seamless gear changes. The engine vibrates from side to side at idle like a lumpy V8 car at the lights, but instantly runs smoothly as you accelerate away. The engine is a solid simple mechanical design with modern materials using pushrods and roller rockers, an air-cooled sump with fins to cool the oil, and two valves for each air-cooled cylinder as opposed to many of the water-cooled engines used today.

Moto Guzzi V85 TT
Classic Enduro.





"THE RETRO CUES
ABOUND, FROM
THE SHAPE OF THE
TANK TO THE SHAPE
OF THE HEADLIGHT
TO THE MINIMALIST
BODYWORK AND
TUBULAR STEEL
FRAME"



Water cooling can allow designers to reduce internal clearances and get more power from an engine, but it also increases complexity, weight and risk as anyone who has had a blown hose or damaged radiator out the back of Birdsville may know. The basic design tries to keep things simple and hopefully reliable. The sump and exhaust are protected by a neat aluminium stone guard and the motivation is transmitted through a dry clutch to the six-speed gearbox and shaft drive to the back wheel.

The 80 horses coming from the fuel-injected V-twin are not class-leading numbers, but they also don't tell the whole story. The gearing feels high, however the torque curve feels broad and strong so the engine always seemed to have it covered. Overtaking was the only time I would have liked a little more urgency from the ponies to get out and around, but it never really felt underpowered.

ON AND OFF THE ROAD

Handling is stable and accurate at speed, showing its road pedigree while providing enough off-road capability for those harder to get to places. Actually the standout feature of this bike for me is its turn-in and handling on the road. There was so much accuracy on turn-in I felt I could put the bike anywhere in the corner.

I didn't venture on the rough or tight or mountainous tracks, however it was great on forest roads despite the fact you were always aware of its weight compared to a single-cylinder machine.



The footpegs feature removable rubber pads, the levers eccentric adjusters.



The standard bashguard is fine for dirt roads.

AN ITALIAN R80G/S

It's only taken Moto Guzzi 35 years, but the folks at Mandello del Lario have finally gotten around to copying the BMW R 80 G/S. The Italians have added a little more capacity — an 850 vs 800 — but other than that the stats are pretty similar.

Both bikes are compact adventure bikes with shaft drive, spoked wheels and European flair. Sure, one is a V-twin and the other a flat twin and the BMW gets by with carburettors while the Guzzi is injected and... well really, they are generations apart, but I reckon they are aimed at the same buyer — a middle-aged man (or couple) looking for an easy-to-ride go-anywhere motorcycle.

Both bikes feature air-cooled twin-cylinder motors with two valves per cylinder, a dry clutch and shaft drive. The Guzzi has an extra cog in the gearbox with six speeds, and produces heaps more power — 80hp vs 50. Things like weight, wheelbase, seat height — all very similar.

One big difference is the front wheel, a 21in unit with a skinny tyre on the BMW, a fatter 19-incher on the Guzzi. Traditionalists will prefer the larger hoop, but the improved road performance does make the 19 a better choice for most owners.

BMW got the R 80 G/S right. It didn't take the world by storm, but it did change the world of motorcycling. Rightly considered the grandfather of the modern adventure bike, it sold well enough to be developed and redeveloped into the bikes which today account for over half of BMW's sales in Australia.

When the G/S was launched it was considered a bit of a divergent child by many BMW owners, most of whom rode touring bikes. Here at ARR we have no idea if the original G/S was an inspiration for the V85TT, or if its similarities are a complete coincidence, but either way, having the bike as a new option for getting adventurous is a good thing.



A 23 litre tank should take you over 400km.



The colour instrument panel is pretty cutting-edge tech.



There's a single, high large black muffler which tucks in behind the optional panniers.

"THE V85TT FEELS VERY SMOOTH, SOLID, WELL BUILT, AND MECHANICALLY VERY QUIET AND CIVILISED, WITH SEAMLESS GEAR CHANGES"

There are three traction modes available, accessed by pressing the starter button once the engine is running. Road, Rain and Off-Road modes change the traction control and ABS to suit the conditions, with the off-road mode turning off the rear ABS and minimising the front intrusion. The road setting is great on the road but is very obtrusive off-road, so these modes are very useful.

The handlebars are wide, which is a common trait in the adventure segment. Cruise control helps cover the long boring bits, however there is no tyre pressure monitor or heated handgrips, which would have been a nice feature. A USB outlet on the dash provides power for your phone or GPS, which has become a must these days.

The narrow hand guards on the handlebars provide some protection from stones and the elements. The mirrors stick out nice and wide past the handlebars, providing good vision behind, but have no ability to fold away. They are functional as long as you stay upright, however neither the handguards nor mirrors would put up much of a fight if the bike was dropped on the ground.

The screen is functional, keeping the wind off your chest and low enough so you can stand up on the footpegs and not have it come up and hit you in the chest or neck when negotiating rough terrain. There is adjustment available to roll the screen back or forwards, which requires tightening with an Allen key on two bolts. Surely they could have made this more convenient by using a nut that could be loosened easily by hand?

Up front, the TFT readout is clear and colourful and provides all the info you need on a trip away, with a nice little cowl over the top to help shade the screen from the sun to make it easier to read in bright conditions.

A strange feature of the gear selection indicator on the dash readout is that it will go blank when you are stopped so you can't tell what gear you are in before you pull away. It will tell you when you are in neutral, but needs engine revs and speed to calculate which gear you are in. I guess it's no big deal for all of us who have spent years without that technology, but knowing you are in first before you pull away from the lights would be nice and shouldn't be too difficult these days. I believe there is also intercom, phone and navigation connection functionality that will be available on the dash screen in the near future, however I did not see that function on this bike.





"THE COMPANY IS NOT TRYING TO BE THE BEST AT EVERYTHING, JUST TO BE REALLY GOOD, CAPABLE, PERHAPS A LITTLE EXOTIC AND DIFFERENT"





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The seat looks and feels comfortable for covering distance without pain. The riding position feels natural and open for someone 180cm tall and transitioning to standing feels comfortable and upright.

A steel frame around the rear load rack is a nice feature, extending along the back of the seat with provision to bolt on optional panniers. The frame provides plenty of securing points for strapping down loads onto the back of the bike and for the pillion to hang onto. A side stand as well as a centre stand are fitted and are a must for on-road repair and maintenance tasks.

IS IT WORTH IT?

All in all I very much enjoyed travelling on the V85TT, especially touring along winding country roads where it felt most at home to me. At \$20,690 for the standard colour and another \$700 for the Evocative model, it feels well-built and civilised.

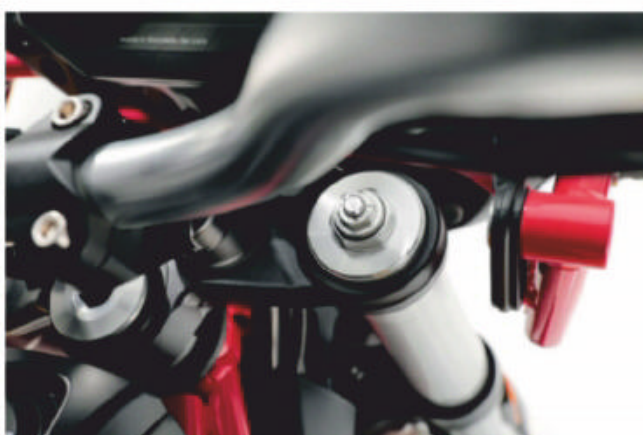
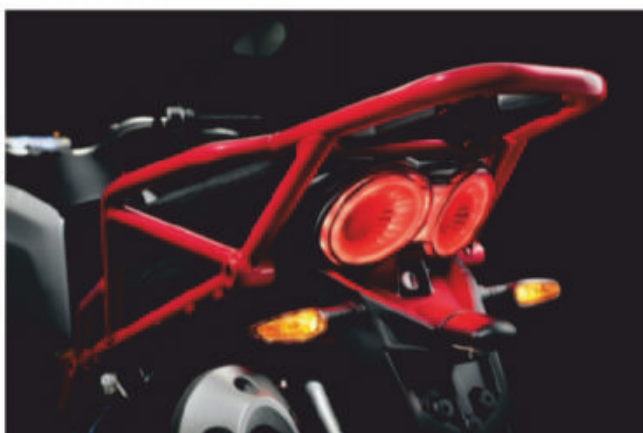
So who would want the V85TT? Who is the target buyer? Why did Guzzi make the decisions it did and does it do things better than the competition?

Moto Guzzi has dug back into motorcycling history for inspiration. The company is not trying to be the best at everything, just to be really good, capable, perhaps a little exotic and different.

In my mind it is appealing to the cashed-up baby boomers and playing to their sense of the past in a really well-polished modern version of a 40-year-old dream. The spoked wheels with tubes are more about the retro cues than outright off-road adventure capability. The air-cooled V-twin engine is reminiscent of a simpler time and sounds great as well. The position of the rear shock with the cam adjustment on the spring preload is a modern version of classic design, with cues that flow beautifully through the machine.

I'll leave it up to you to decide if you love or hate the styling, but when dealing with competition like BMW, KTM and the big Japanese brands, it's better for a relatively small-volume Italian exotic to be similar but different. And in that regard I think Moto Guzzi nailed it.

For me it's a comfortable, capable and civilised all-round tourer with beautiful manners, finish and design. It's something a little different and it will win hearts out there. **ARR**



SPECIFICATIONS

2019 MOTO GUZZI V85TT

ENGINE

Type: Longitudinal 90° V-twin, two valves per cylinder

Capacity: 853cc

Bore x stroke: 84 x 77mm

Compression ratio: 10.5:1

Engine management: Electronic Fuel Injection, 52mm throttle body

PERFORMANCE

Claimed maximum power: 80hp (59 kW) @ 7750 rpm

Claimed maximum torque: 80Nm @ 5000rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type: Six-speed

Final drive: Shaft

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR

Chassis: Steel cradle

Front suspension: Upsidedown hydraulic telescopic fork Ø 41 mm, with adjustable preload and spring preload

Rear suspension: Swingarm Twinsided with lateral mono shock absorber, adjustable preload and spring preload

Front brakes: Twin 320mm discs with radial Brembo four-piston callipers

Rear brake: Single 260mm disc with four-piston Brembo calliper

Tyres: Front: 110/90-19 Rear: 150/70-17

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Rake: 28°

Trail: 128mm

Claimed dry weight: 208kg

Seat height: 830mm

Wheelbase: 1,530mm

Fuel capacity: 23L

ETCETERA

Price: From \$20,690 Ride Away (Uni Colour) \$21,390 (Evocative)

Colours: Gold/White/Black, White/Red/Black, Grey, Blue, Red

Test bike supplied by: PS Importers

Warranty: 2 years, unlimited kilometres

BIKER FRIENDLY!

Thinking of a different route to take on your next epic ride? This new section is designed to inspire you. We will present snapshots of epic touring regions and, importantly, the iconic bike-friendly pubs, cafes and accommodation to aim for. If you have a 'must see' pub or cafe that you think we should all know about, contact us at roadrider@umco.com.au



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"...TIGHT AND
SWEEPING
CURVES, ONE OF
THE LONGEST
CLIMBS IN THE
COUNTRY..."



THE NIKEN GT, ON TOUR

Three wheels across some great roads in Northern NSW...

WORDS AND PICS BY: PHIL JAMES



You know how it is. As soul-satisfying as washing the garden and mowing the dog is... the impulse to get on the bike eventually becomes irresistible. When Coolangatta accommodation at 60 per cent off came up, it was time to commit. Add in the Niken GT I tested for the last issue was still available and it was a no-brainer.

My ability to get rained on is legendary; my riding friends call me the “Kiss of Death”. Departure day from Newcastle went exactly to script. We’d had no rain for three months, then, two days before lift-off, the Hunter scored 150mm. We needed it, but also perfect for bringing oil up to the road surface. The rain continued to my breakfast stop at Gloucester, and so did the slipperiest conditions I’ve ever encountered. Even the Niken’s leach-like grip was tested. Gentle applications of throttle or brake had the electronics — traction control and ABS — active. Tricky, but no heart-in-the-mouth stuff. Might have been different on two wheels.





"...SPECTACULAR SCENERY AND CLIMBS TO A HEIGHT OF 1200m JUST OUTSIDE WALCHA"

Gloucester is a recommended fuel/cafe stop; the number of bikes you see parked suggests I'm not the only one it works for. From Gloucester, it was Thunderbolt's Way to Walcha (named after the charismatic bushranger, Captain Thunderbolt). If you've not done it, you're missing out. It's roughly 100km through some spectacular scenery and climbs to a height of 1200m just outside Walcha. There are tight and sweeping curves, one of the longest climbs in the country and the temperature drops 10 degrees at the top.

Walcha's a good meal or overnight stop and boasts some excellent public sculpture dotted around the place if you'd like to do a walk. Another fun fact, Walcha has four roads in and out, and a police station... with a police car...

The drought is really biting on the New England Tablelands and this certainly showed as I got closer to Walcha. It's a depressing landscape. Hopefully, by the time you read this, it will have passed, but it's likely to last into 2020. If you'd like to help, there's a charity, "Buy a Bale", which does great work turning small donations into action.

After Walcha, the route passes through Kentucky (Australia has one too) and onto Uralla for lunch. Uralla is becoming a bit of a "foodie precinct", outshining neighbouring Armidale in this respect. If you've had a hankering for a sidecar, Uralla is the place to go as the Australian Ural distributor is here and is more than happy to show off its Russian machines.

The cafe strip has another surprising business, "Defence Models and Graphics". Models and modelling supplies are sold, but their main business is scratch-





built prototype models for defence contractors and the government. It's an impressive example of how "out of the square" thinking can bring money into a town.

Armidale marks the start of Waterfall Way to Dorrigo. As discussed above, all the waterfalls were broken. The road goes through Ebor, which is noteworthy for two reasons: Ebor Falls (broken) and the 1300m elevation. Being a tableland, its elevation is deceptive. Note to the unprepared... it gets colder and colder as you approach. Single-digit temperatures are the norm in winter, and occasionally it snows.

Waterfall Way becomes Armidale Rd at the Dorrigo turn-off, and goes through Nymboida to Grafton. This road has the distinction of being the only sealed, North/South, B Road (the alternatives are highways). It's a cracking run through forest, but it's being upgraded, carrying more and more traffic, and is

losing its "isolated, ride to the conditions" charm.

The overnight stop was Grafton — a city of 20,000 and no traffic lights. Impressive. Grafton is finally getting a new road bridge across the mighty Clarence River after nearly 80 years of driving on top of the railway bridge. The locals are excited, but there is controversy. Traffic lights are part of the deal...

Apart from being largely closed on Sunday, Grafton has a lot to offer bike riders. No less than six popular roads radiate out from the city. If you're comfortable with dirt, there's even more. Accommodation is plentiful and reasonable. The Crown Hotel on the river is popular, offering pub and motel rooms. I like the Civic Motel with its central location and undercover parking. Walking Grafton's jacaranda-lined streets along the river and over the bridge is a good way to finish the day (or you could go to a pub).

"...RAINFOREST ON THE LEFT, VIEWS FOR 50KM ON THE RIGHT"

The seductively named but uninspiring, "Summerland Way" took me north to Casino the next morning. It's Australia's cattle capital – for those doing a meal stop, just go with that. Most of Casino isn't open on Sunday either, but the shopping strip does have a talking toilet. Patrons receive detailed verbal instruction. The fact I find this interesting is probably cause for concern. At Kyogle, it was time to head towards the coast through the stunning Border Range via Nimbin.

Nimbin is a must-do. It's always open and is a bustling little community with a great cafe culture and shops selling Nimbin stuff (let's call it... alternative). There's a purveyor of fossil fuel, whom I'm sure the locals don't talk to, but riders may have to as petrol stations are scarce. There are four roads into town – all are sealed and scenic. Did I mention the wheel alignment business is buoyant in this area? The final push into Coolangatta was through Uki, a popular day-trip destination.

Timing is everything when staying in Coolangatta. Get it wrong and it's family holiday hell... expensive and crowded. Tourist pressure spills onto the hinterland roads, and they're not to be enjoyed if you're stuck behind a rental car and an unbroken centreline. There is a brief "off" season at the end of winter when accommodation is cheap and the roads empty. The perfect time for bikes.

An old friend of mine (coincidentally the owner of a Suzuki VStrom 1000) made the sea change a few years ago and is now a Coolangatta local. Everything came together nicely, as Mike agreed to share local knowledge and take me on a secret back road tour. Finding out secrets is always exciting; I was looking forward to it.

Perfect weather (the drought again) made for a pleasant start to Mike's Hinterland Magical Mystery Tour. It's world heritage-listed and interesting geology. I find *ARR* readers can't get enough geology, so I'd like to offer this. The Border Range was once a giant shield volcano (like Hawaii's big island). It has eroded over the millennia into a rugged and dramatic landscape. The remnants of volcanic plugs rise like giant towers above the surrounding mountains, and rich soil fills the valleys. Building straight roads wasn't possible – perfect for agriculture, stunning scenery and... bike riding. The area usually has high rainfall, requiring high road maintenance. The council (like most councils) struggles to fund this. Best leave the cruiser at home if you choose to come here. The Niken was ideal.

It was a bit of a special day as I chased Mike through a variety of C roads and rainforest. In some places the road was single lane; rainforest on the left, views for 50km on the right. Fantastic. I can't tell you where we went. I'd gone into "tail-light follow" mode, the brain GPS switching off. We finished with a beer and Mike revealed some of his secrets, but I didn't take notes – so it's still a mystery (duh). We'll just have to do it again...





Day one of the return journey started with a mid-30s temperature forecast, and... catastrophic fire danger. Lovely. My route took me along Tweed Valley Way. As the former Pacific Highway, it's a great bit of road running over the Burringbar Range with a nice series of sweepers. Unfortunately, when they moved the highway, they didn't move the speed camera. Coolamon Scenic Drive leads from the former A1 to Mullumbimby (gotta love Australian place names). There are many route options from Mullumbimby to Lismore. All seem good, but the B62 (Bangalow Rd) is best avoided, (although it is cruiser-friendly).

At Casino that crappy weather forecast proved accurate. The temperature hit 37 degrees. Frack, a week ago it was winter. Note to touring newbies. Wear a hydration pack (Camelbak) and use it, otherwise by mid-afternoon your brain turns to jelly. From Casino it was back down Summerland Way, then Orara Way to the overnight stop at Coffs Harbour. Riding conditions moved to the "not fun" zone as bushfire smoke turned the sun into a dull orange orb. It was late afternoon when I rolled into Coffs, and frankly, it was good to get there and out of the heat.

The forecast for the final day wasn't good either. Catastrophic Fire Danger and raised dust. "Could be a difficult day," I thought... and so it proved to be. An early start had me up the escarpment to Dorrigo for breakfast. The road from Bellingen to Dorrigo is top tier as far as twisties go — if you don't get stuck behind a





slow-moving vehicle. Usually you do. Today I was lucky and got a clear shot at it. It was a good start to the day. At the breakfast cafe, staff were very concerned about a fire out of town, and as it turned out, later that day houses were lost. Just awful.

Blustery and dust-filled winds made the run from Dorrigo back to Walcha hard work. A sign at Walcha advised Thunderbolts Way was closed due to the bushfires. My day just got 150km longer. Not good, as I'd now be travelling through the kangaroo "rush hour" and into the night.

The best route to reduce late-afternoon wildlife exposure was via 40km of unsealed forest road between Comboyne and Wingham. Then on to Gloucester before sunset. The Niken's unsealed road ability made this an easy choice. The shortest sealed option was an hour longer.

Time to "press on". A few minutes out of Walcha, that police car I mentioned earlier came over a crest, the officer eyeballing me hard. "He's going to want to talk," I thought... just as his brake lights came on. Resistance is futile — best to pull over immediately and so I did. It seems a breath test was required. That's ok, I think breath testing keeps us all safe. Turns out he was a bike rider and curious about my three-wheeled friend. I'm sure if we weren't both "on the clock" it would have been a long conversation. Anyway, we wished each other well and carried on. Road safety as it should be done.

I did manage Gloucester by sunset, and after 660km for the day my driveway finally appeared. I should mention the Niken's comfort. I was weary, but that was all — no especially sore body parts. Impressive.

In nine days I'd been frozen (eight degrees) and fried (37 degrees), had great food, seen spectacular scenery and met great people. That's the joy of touring. I'd also seen the pain and fire danger of the drought first-hand, and it's a terrible thing. Despite all this, I still count myself as being lucky to do this type of trip. Floating through the landscape on a bike is living, that's why I love it. It won't be long before I'm off again. **ARR**



"THE ROAD FROM BELLINGEN TO DORRIGO IS TOP TIER AS FAR AS TWISTIES GO..."



SHOW YOUR HAND

Helmet, eye protection, gloves. Three things to never ride without, and I don't care how hot it is.

PHOTOS: NIGEL PATERSON





Even a minor spill without gloves on can put you off work for weeks. Lose a decent amount of skin off your hands and you won't be able to hold a pen, use a keyboard, grip a tool... which will make you feel like a tool.

But I don't ride expecting to fall off: really, I wear gloves because it makes for a more comfortable ride than having naked hands.

Even in the height of summer I'll wear gloves: I've even been sunburnt in the gaps between glove and jacket. The trick is to have airflow, and that means ventilation or mesh components and breathable materials.

A comfortable summer glove enhances feel at the controls, protects from the sun, bugs and the occasional rock, stops your hands getting dirty from your bike's handgrips and, of course, should save your skin in the event of a fall.

The best motorcycle gloves are pre-shaped to be comfortable while riding, not walking. How it feels wrapped around your handlebar grip is important, not how good it looks draped over your seat.

Practical gloves will have armour built-in, there to protect the knuckles and bottom edge of your palm, parts which can get slapped on the ground in a crash.

The materials will be designed with motorcycle riding in mind. If leather is used, it should be top-grain: often this results in not just a more protective glove, but one which lasts longer too.

Every motorcycle glove should have a fastener around the wrist: sport and longer gloves often have two. It's not obvious to many riders why – if a glove feels snug they think it's fine, but they don't realise gloves can be thrown off in an accident.

Put your current gloves on and flick your wrist, hard, with relaxed fingers: if the glove starts to come off, you can be sure it'll come right off in a big crash, moments before you need the glove the most.

When you're trying on gloves at a bike shop (still the best place to buy them, because you can try them on), fasten them properly then try to pull them off – if you can remove them, don't buy them. Consider also the convenience factor – too many riders leave the fastener loose, so they can

get their gloves on and off quickly, which almost certainly means they will fall off in an accident.

How much protection you need is a very personal choice. Cruising around on a fine Sunday on a classic bike at low speeds isn't likely to result in a big crash, so basic leather gloves would probably be fine, although the Saber gloves from Macna reviewed in this feature would be better.

Getting around the city in the heat would see me reach for the Alpinestars Copper glove or Five Gloves Stunt Evo – ventilation, protection and touchscreen accessibility.

For broader use across the weather spectrum, Macna's Chicane is that bit heavier.

And for sport riding in the heat, Five Gloves has its RFX Airflow, a racing glove redesigned and built to provide ventilation combined with lots of armour and a full wrist covering.

Dainese sent us two pairs of mesh construction gloves which have funky Italian styling with excellent comfort.

And that's just seven sets of gloves from the hundreds available in Australia.

FIVE GLOVES STUNT EVO AIRFLO

Description: With vents and mesh construction, the Five Gloves Stunt Evo Airflo is the summer version of one of the company's most popular gloves. Its short length offers the potential to get the breeze flowing into your jacket, while there are ventilated TPU metacarpal-knuckle and knuckle protective shells, 4-way Spandex stretch panels for comfort and touchscreen functionality.

Review: The Urbans have a modern, youthful design. We like the fit and comfort, and really like the pull-tab for getting them on, the Velcro closure for keeping them on and the carbon/tpu palm slider.

RRP: \$109.95

More info: <http://bit.ly/2NnY2cx>

Sizes: S-XXXL

Touchscreen: Yes, works very well





FIVE GLOVES RFX2 AIRFLOW

Description: An ultra-ventilated sport glove. Features perforated leather and ventilated mesh fabric with vented PU upper protective shells to offer optimum air circulation. Mixed palm in full-grain leather and perforated leather, with synthetic leather reinforcements to increase grip and PU slider. Perforated leather cuff with thumb and upper section in mesh fabric. Gel thumb reinforcements.

Review: The best gloves we've ever worn for summer sports riding. Designed to go over leathers, and should stay on in any situation thanks to the double closure. Lots of protective elements and the curved fit is excellent. Not 100% happy with the mesh over the thumb region, but overall we'd be happy to ride very fast in RFX2 Airflow gloves.

RRP: \$199.95

More info: <http://bit.ly/2NQyHab>

Sizes: S-XXXL

Touchscreen: No



MACNA CHICANE

Description: A short sports glove with R.I.S.C. Carbon knuckle and TPR finger protection, palm slider and leather construction. The Chicane is made primarily of cowhide and goat leather with neoprene sections for extra comfort.

Review: A highly protective short glove *Australian Road Rider* found to be comfortable and practical. The construction is impressive but it's more of a three-season glove, lacking ventilation but not getting too hot to wear during our testing. The velcro closure is easy to use and the construction feels heavy-duty.

RRP: \$149.95

More info: <http://bit.ly/2NMKruD>

Sizes: S-XXXL

Touchscreen: Yes, reasonable



DAINESE BORA

Description: A breathable and stretch fabric glove with a micro suede palm, the Boras feature a palm reinforcement, inserts on the fingers and knuckle protectors. CE 1 approved. Available in a variety of colours.

Review: Dainese is one of the best-known brands of motorcycle safety wear, which gives me confidence these gloves will perform in a crash, because they feel very lightweight. They are very comfortable thanks to the stretch material, mesh and ventilation.

RRP: \$109.95

More info: <http://bit.ly/2qdBRgA>

Sizes: S-XL

Touchscreen: Yes, effective

DAINESE AIR FRAME

Description: A short glove with a sporty look and great warm-weather performance, the Air Frame is constructed of a breathable, elasticated fabric, with perforated mesh on the fingers and back. Soft inserts are placed at the knuckles and the sides of the palm, and the index finger features Dainese Smart Touch technology. Unisex, with small sizes available.

Review: This fabric, goatskin and synthetic materials glove is designed to keep the air flowing through to keep you cool, and works very well at this. Very comfortable.

RRP: \$89.95

More info: <http://bit.ly/2NLIP6D>

Sizes: XXXS-XXL

Touchscreen: Yes, effective



ALPINESTARS COPPER GLOVE

Description: The Copper is a lightweight urban glove with modern style. It's lightweight and made with lots of synthetic materials for a stretch fit. Features hard knuckle and padded palm protection. Full synthetic suede palm and padding on the fingers for enhanced rider comfort.

Review: A close-fitting synthetic glove ideal for summer riding. Short in the wrist and nice fitting, its armour is understated and it's likely to appear to those not looking for anything too traditional. Excellent value.

RRP: \$69.95

More info: <http://bit.ly/2ruXjON>

Sizes: S-XXXL

Touchscreen: Yes, good

MACNA SABER

Description: A classic styled leather glove with modern ergonomics, such as the comfortable Ergo Thumb and the handy Single Pull Cuff. Goat leather construction.

Review: Perfect for those looking for a bit of style in a ventilated summer glove. Comfortable and a practical length, the Saber is quite traditional in style, although the protective panels across the knuckles and on the heel of the palm add to the leather construction to give us confidence the glove will offer decent protection during a spill. Goat skin is lighter and tougher than cowhide, and the Saber gloves' leather is soft and supple. Ventilation is provided almost entirely by small holes in the fingers, palm and near the wrist section of the gloves. The closure is a single looped velcro fastener.

RRP: \$99.95

More info: <http://bit.ly/2NMKruD>

Sizes: S-XXXXL

Touchscreen: Yes, reasonable



THE AUSTRALIAN ROADRIDER THE REAL RIDE

READER SURVEY



Scan here to fill out online or go to roadrider.com.au/readers-survey

WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOU, YOUR BIKE AND WHAT MAKES YOU LOVE THIS WHOLE MOTORCYCLING GAME!

Not only will you contribute to making *Road Rider* better, you will also get an awesome Pirelli team hat from our mates at Link International for your efforts. YES everyone that completes the survey will get one. Just fill out the survey the old school way (cut out and post back to the address provided) or go to roadrider.com.au and do it online, look for the "2020 Survey" tab at the top.

Send to: *Road Rider* Survey, Locked Bag 154, North Ryde NSW 1670

Name:

Address:

Email: **Phone:**

BASIC IMPORTANT INFO ABOUT YOU (please tick your answer)

Q1. ARE YOU:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q2. WHAT IS YOUR AGE?

- ☐ 17-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-65
- ☐ 66 or over

Q3. WHAT STATE OR TERRITORY ARE YOU FROM?

- ☐ New South Wales
- ☐ Queensland
- ☐ Victoria
- ☐ Australian Capital Territory
- ☐ Northern Territory
- ☐ South Australia
- ☐ Western Australia
- ☐ Tasmania

Remember to fill in your details so we can send your Pirelli team cap prize!

*Name, address, email and all questions answered are essential to claim prize. Prize available to Australian residents only.



Q4. WHAT IS YOUR HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVEL?

- ☐ Under \$50,000
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$80,000
- ☐ \$80,000 to \$110,000
- ☐ Over \$110,000
- ☐ No comment

YOUR BIKE AND RIDING HABITS (please tick what most represents your experience)

Q5. HOW MANY YEARS OF MOTORCYCLE RIDING EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE?

- ☐ None/Learner
- ☐ LAMS or less than 3 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10-20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

Q6. HOW OFTEN DO YOU RIDE YOUR MOTORCYCLE?

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ 4-6 times a week
- ☐ 1-3 times a week
- ☐ At least once a fortnight
- ☐ At least once a month or less
- ☐ Don't have a bike right now

Q7. HOW MANY MOTORCYCLES DO YOU OWN?

- ☐ None, looking to buy
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two or more

Q8. WHAT TYPE OF MOTORCYCLE DO YOU OWN OR ARE CONSIDERING?

- ☐ Sport
- ☐ Sport Touring
- ☐ Cruiser
- ☐ Touring
- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ Off Road

Q9. WHAT BRAND OF MOTORCYCLE(S) DO YOU OWN OR ARE CONSIDERING?

- ☐ Aprilia
- ☐ Benelli
- ☐ BMW
- ☐ Ducati
- ☐ Harley-Davidson
- ☐ Honda
- ☐ Husqvarna
- ☐ Kawasaki
- ☐ KTM
- ☐ Moto Guzzi
- ☐ Mutt
- ☐ MV Augusta

- ☐ Norton
- ☐ Royal Enfield
- ☐ Suzuki
- ☐ SWM
- ☐ Triumph
- ☐ Yamaha

Q10. IF YOU OWN ONE OF THE PREVIOUS WOULD YOU CONSIDER BUYING ANOTHER BRAND FOR YOUR NEXT BIKE?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q11. HAVE YOU TAKEN AN EXTENDED BIKING TRIP IN THE LAST THREE YEARS?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

AND HOW LONG WERE THEY?

- ☐ Overnight
- ☐ 3 days, 2 nights
- ☐ Up to a week
- ☐ Longer than a week



AUSTRALIAN ROAD RIDER AND YOU

Q12. WHAT MAINLY PROMPTED YOU TO PURCHASE THIS ISSUE OF AUSTRALIAN ROAD RIDER?

- ☐ I always do
- ☐ Something on the cover appealed to me
- ☐ Bike tests
- ☐ Touring articles
- ☐ Product articles
- ☐ Historial articles
- ☐ I'm a subscriber
- ☐ All of the above

Q13. WHAT CONTENT DO YOU LIKE THE MOST - RANK HIGHEST (1) TO LOWEST (7)?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Bike tests and reviews | |
| Destination features | |
| Interesting rider stories | |
| Tips for riders | |
| Historical bike articles | |
| Regular editorial columns | |
| Latest industry and bike news | |

Q14. HOW MANY PEOPLE OTHER THAN YOURSELF WOULD YOU ESTIMATE READ YOUR COPY OF AUSTRALIAN ROAD RIDER MAGAZINE?

- ☐ No one else
- ☐ One other person
- ☐ 2-3 people
- ☐ More than 3 other people

Q15. HOW OFTEN DO YOU ENQUIRE ABOUT ANY OF THE PRODUCTS OR SERVICES ADVERTISED IN AUSTRALIAN ROAD RIDER MAGAZINE?

- ☐ Regularly

- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never, but may in the future
- ☐ Never and unlikely to do so in the future

Q16. HAVE YOU BOUGHT A PRODUCT OR SERVICE AS A RESULT OF SEEING IT IN AUSTRALIAN ROAD RIDER?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q17. WOULD YOU PERCEIVE A PRODUCT ADVERTISED IN OR ENDORSED BY AUSTRALIAN ROAD RIDER TO BE CREDIBLE?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q18. DO YOU VISIT THE WWW.ROADRIDER.COM.AU WEBSITE?

- ☐ Regularly
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never, but may in the future
- ☐ Never and unlikely to do so in the future

19. DO YOU VISIT OTHER MOTORCYCLING WEBSITES?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

IF SO WHICH ONES:

- ☐ MCNews.com.au
- ☐ fullnoise.com.au
- ☐ AMCN.com.au
- ☐ bikesales.com.au
- ☐ motorbikewriter.com
- ☐ bikereview.com.au
- ☐ Other

Q20. WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU VISIT A MOTORCYCLING WEBSITE?

- ☐ Day-to-day news
- ☐ Bike reviews
- ☐ Trips and destinations
- ☐ Racing results
- ☐ Videos
- ☐ Other

Q21. DO YOU USE FACEBOOK FOR MOTORCYCLE NEWS?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

IF SO, DO YOU FOLLOW #AUSTRALIANROADRIDER ON FACEBOOK?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q22. WHO WOULD YOU TRUST MORE ON FACEBOOK IF YOU WERE SEEKING A REVIEW OF A PRODUCT?

- ☐ Australian Road Rider
- ☐ The company producing the product

Q23. WHAT OTHER MOTORCYCLE PUBLICATIONS, IF ANY, DO YOU BUY, PICK UP OR SUBSCRIBE TO?

- ☐ AMCN
- ☐ Australian Motorcyclist
- ☐ Riding On
- ☐ Ultimate Adventure Bike
- ☐ Adventure Rider
- ☐ Retrobike
- ☐ HOG
- ☐ Heavy Duty
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None

UPKEEP AND SPENDING ON YOUR BIKE AND ACCESSORIES

Q24. HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND ANNUALLY ON MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORIES, NOT INCLUDING FUEL, REGO OR INSURANCE?

- ☐ Nothing
- ☐ Less than \$1000 per year
- ☐ \$1000 to \$2000 per year
- ☐ \$2000 to \$3000 per year
- ☐ More than \$3000

Q25. HOW MANY TYRES DO YOU REPLACE IN AN AVERAGE YEAR?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

Q26. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PURCHASING IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS? (you can tick more than one)

- ☐ Accessories
- ☐ Bike clothing
- ☐ Helmet
- ☐ Gloves
- ☐ Rider training
- ☐ New bike
- ☐ Replacement seat or cover
- ☐ Luggage
- ☐ Intercom or other communication equipment
- ☐ Exhaust
- ☐ Tours in Australia
- ☐ Tours overseas
- ☐ Trailer

- ☐ Suspension upgrade or service

Q27. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ONLINE MOTORCYCLE PARTS AND ACCESSORIES STORE? (write answer)

.....

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THIS STORE?

.....

Q28. IF YOU COULD SIGN UP TO A NEWSLETTER THAT WOULD GIVE YOU EXCLUSIVE, WEEKLY, HIGH DISCOUNT MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORY DEALS, WOULD YOU?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No





BETTER COMMUNICATION

Interphone motorcycle communication systems are designed to keep you in touch with the right people while on your bike.

Interphone's offerings include the Connect system for rider to passenger, Avant for conversation with up to eight bike-to-bike intercoms and radio, GPS or music in the background and Active, high quality audio with up to four intercoms.

The systems all talk to each other, so you might buy an Avant single unit to connect to other riders while your passenger might simply get the Connect to talk just to the rider.

All the units feature music listening and sharing, FM radio, a Smartphone App, rainproofing, high quality stereo sound, voice commands, automatically adjusted volume and direct access to all functions.

The Connect (single \$239.95, double kit \$429.95) has 15 hours of battery life, the Avant and Active 20 hours.

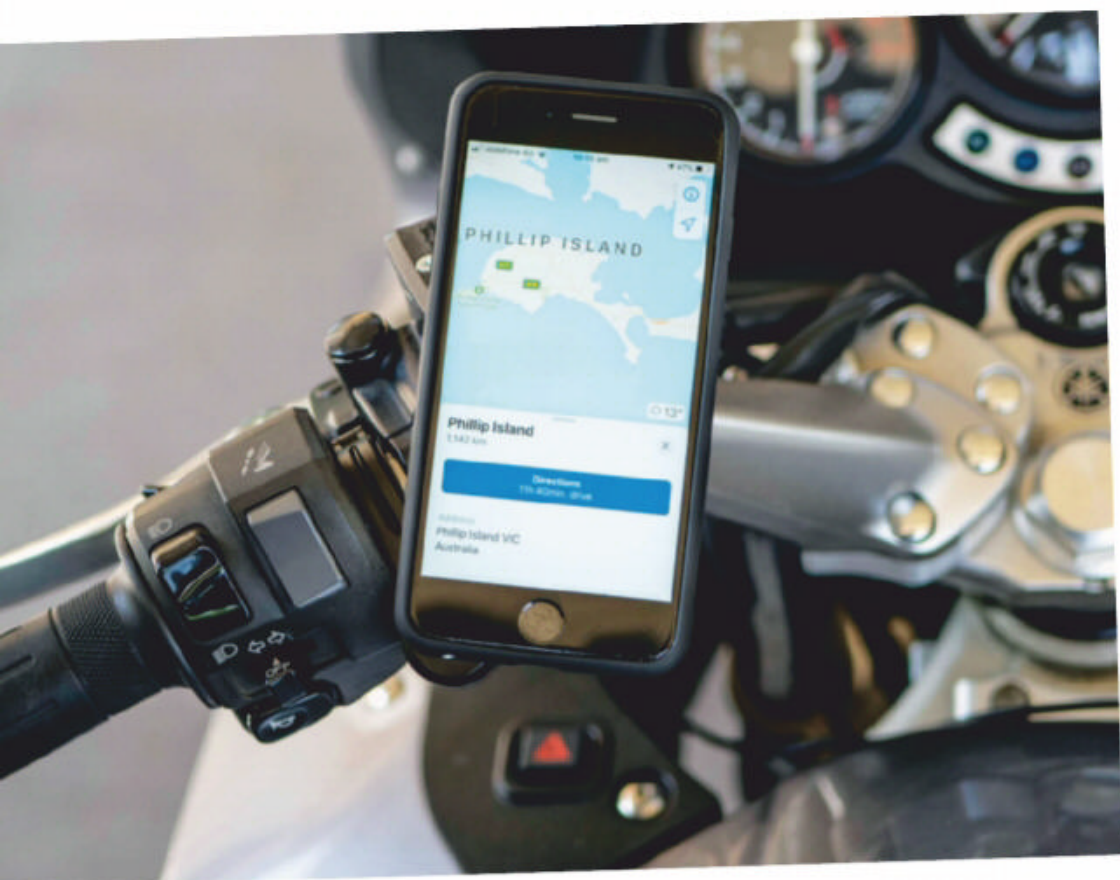
The Active model (Single \$319.95, double \$549.95) features group chat of up to four units using Bluetooth 4.2 and a range of one kilometre.

The Avant is the top of the range, with dual Bluetooth 5.0 modules, group chat with 8 other units extended range to 1.7km, the ability to share phone calls and all the features of the Active and Connect. The Avant is priced at \$479.95 (single) and \$799.95 (double kit).

Interphone also has a huge range of accessories, from headphone adaptors to power sources to cases and more.

Available from bike shops across Australia: ficeda.com.au/dealerlocator
Catalogue: bit.ly/2Ki2EOK





A BETTER PHONE MOUNT

Mounting your smartphone onto your bike where you can use it means easy access to maps, music and phone calls, which is all good. Mounting a phone so it will stay in place, is accessible and weatherproof, often not so easy.

Recently SP Gadgets sent *Australian Road Rider* the Moto Bundle, which comprises

its black stainless steel 'Moto Mount Pro', phone case (for iPhones 6 through 8), weather cover and bits and pieces to make the unit suitable for as many bikes as possible. (There are other bundles for other phones and you can buy a new case for a new phone separately.)

The case offers (claimed) high impact protection, although there's no front cover (and I wouldn't want one), and it's in



basic black. The mount is built into the case, making it a bit fatter in the centre than maybe you would prefer, but it didn't bother me – I can still get the phone in and out of a pocket easily.

It's best suited to bikes with a somewhat conventional handlebar, and that's what the images in the instructions show: choose the correct size clamp insert (for different thickness handlebars), clamp the mount in place, adjust to suit and tighten with the supplied allen keys. To mount the phone, line up the grooves on the back of the phone case with the raised bars on the mount, turn 90 degrees to lock and you're done. It's one-handed, simple and secure, and unlike my old Ram X-Mount, doesn't interfere

with the buttons on the side of the phone.

The Moto Bundle also comes with a weather cover, which is thick, clear and protective.

My FJR1300 doesn't have tubular bars, but the mount is thin, and I managed to squeeze it in between the left switchblock and the clutch lever mount, which works fine, and makes it a very short stretch from handgrip to the phone.

SP gadgets also has a huge range of other systems to mount your phone – or your action camera – to your bike, car or pushbike.

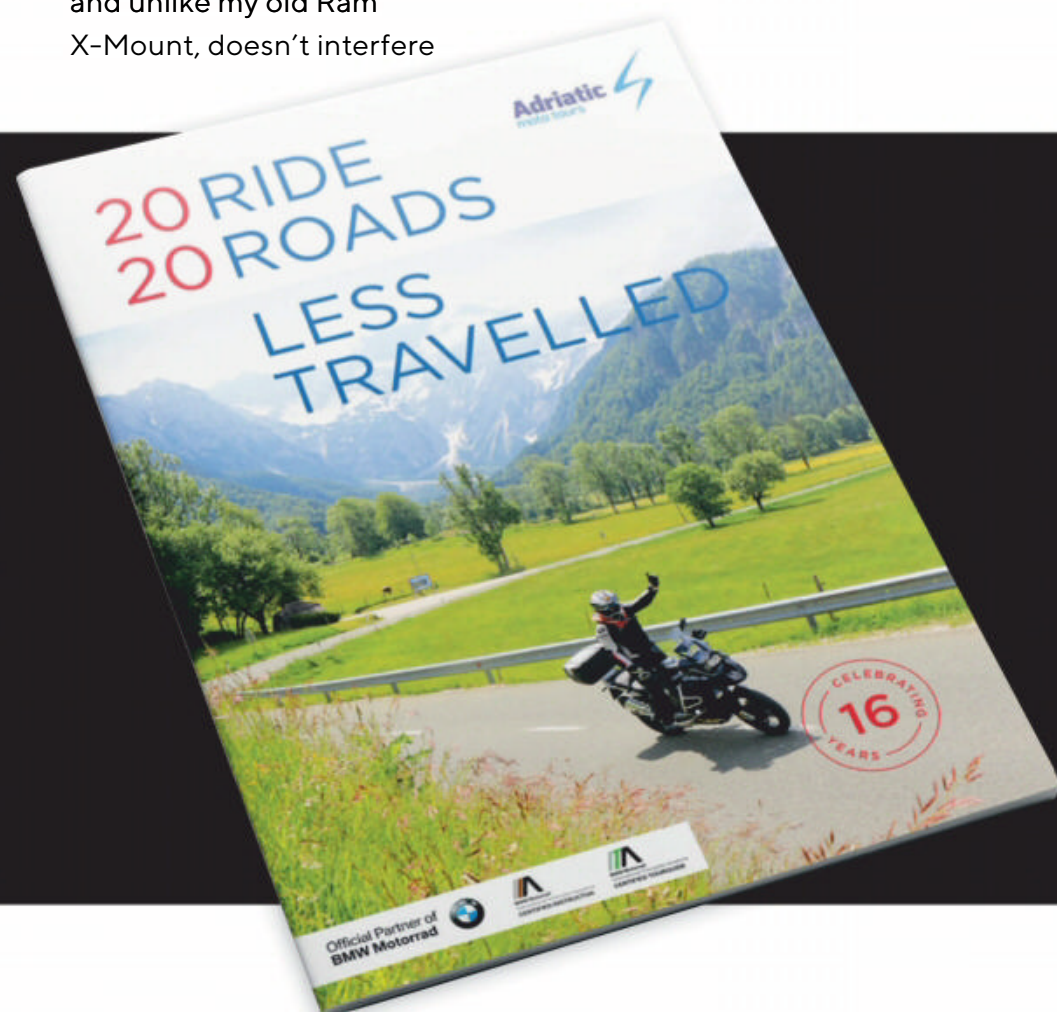
RRP: \$129.95 – unit as supplied. Order online at sp-connect.com.au

HOW TO RIDE EUROPE

The easy way to ride Europe is with Adriatic Moto Tours – the company organises guided and self-guided tours or you can simply rent a bike from them.

Based in the Slovenia, the company's location is really convenient for exploring Central & Eastern Europe, the Alps, the Balkans, Adriatic Coast and the Mediterranean. Adriatic Moto Tours offers bikes from BMW, Harley-Davidson, Suzuki, Ducati, Yamaha and Honda.

AMT recently released its new brochure which can be ordered by visiting www.adriaticmototours.com/Brochures-order – or check out the website www.adriaticmototours.com.





TCX BAJA GORE-TEX BOOTS

BY: RAY MACARTHUR

Adventure boots are such a compromise – they need to be comfortable on and off the bike, day in day out while on tour, yet be tough enough to provide the protection you need in a spill and last for years.

So I must say when I was first handed the latest TCX Baja Gore-Tex boots to test the first thing I noticed was how light weight they were. Considering how heavy some leather boots can be, it's a credit to the modern lightweight materials available today that these boots can be so light and yet perform the function they do. Finished full grain leather, beautifully stitched with all the padding and protection you would expect from a quality Italian designed boot.

Some of the features included are:

- Breathable Gore-Tex lining for keeping your feet dry and comfortable with an

elastic seal around the top of the boot to keep anything out that shouldn't be in.

- A protective shin plate with polyurethane toe and heel inserts for protection.
- TXC's 'Torsion Control System' designed to allow movement with support and protection for the ankle.
- 3 aluminium buckles that are easy and quick to adjust and secure for a comfortable fit.
- Replaceable formed foot-beds I found very comfortable.
- A rubber sole I found surprisingly comfortable to walk and ride in with cross-wise stiffness to resist side load to help protect your foot from being crushed with weight on it.

Of course I've only had these boots for a relatively short time to test and report on however TCX has built its reputation

on racing, where crashing is how racers' find their limits and both riders and manufacturers discover the effectiveness of their gear. It's how they measure them to make them better.

I can say I found them very easy to put on and lock down. They were comfortable to wear after hours in the saddle and my feet didn't get hot and sweaty or sore, however I drew the line at throwing myself down the road to test the product. TCX provide lots of information on this product and how it's made and tested on the website at tcxboots.com so check them out. Just remember it's the poor man that pays twice so don't cheap out on gear meant to protect you and choose quality, tested and made to last.

Sizes: US 5-13

Colours: Black only

More Info: www.tcxboots.com

BLUE MOUNTAINS TIME MACHINE

Nowhere does “retro” quite like our own Blue Mountains

BY: ROD EIME

Riding the Blue Mountains is a well-known weekend excursion for most Sydney-based road riders. We know these roads like the back of our calloused hands, but each time I head up the Great Western Highway, I vow to uncover something I didn’t know about or had habitually missed.

So with a brand-new Harley-Davidson Low Rider S in the driveway and nothing better to do on a glorious spring weekend, I gleefully leapt aboard the 114ci Milwaukee-Eight-powered Softail for a re-examination.

Accommodation can sometimes be hard to find on the weekends, but I did discover this hidden gem, hiding in plain view in the heart of Katoomba.

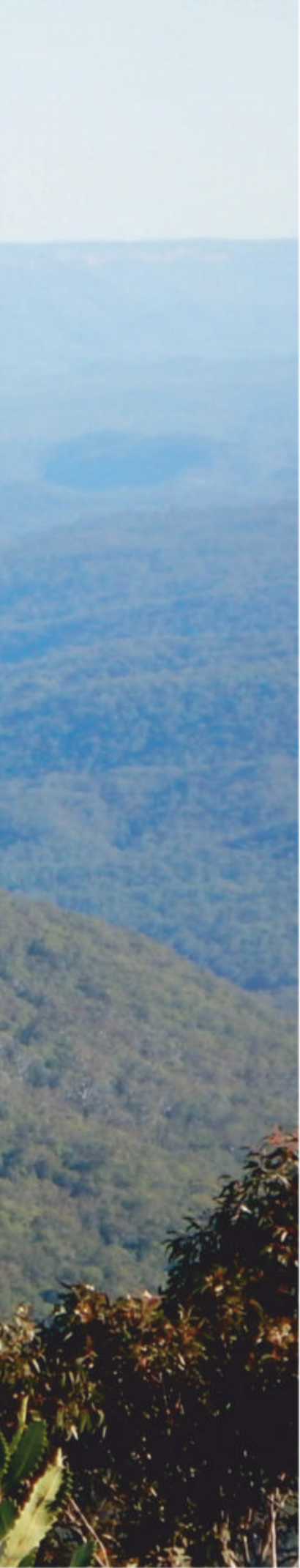
SWEET DREAMS AT PALAIS ROYAL HOTEL, KATOOMBA

This classic 100-year-old hotel has had several personas over the years, yet retains an authentic 1920s aura amid the tasteful renovations.

You could call it a solid 3.5- 4-star offering with modern ensuite bathrooms now in every room. Mine even had a massive bathtub for soaking those weary, ageing bones. There’s plenty of safe off-street parking, although not undercover unfortunately. Breakfast is included in typical buffet style, with generous hot breakfasts cooked to order.

palaisroyale.com.au





OLD-SCHOOL TOURING IN VINTAGE CADILLACS

This could be a fun diversion if you had a free hour or two. Donald has utilised his father's 1929 Cadillac LaSalle V8 as a day tourer, running fun excursions around Katoomba, Leura and Wentworth Falls in the gorgeous old girl, christened "Flora".

"I like to show folks parts of the Blue Mountains few visitors ever see," he tells me as we chug around Cliff Drive, past the old swimming pool.

Donald has also restored two other LaSallees of similar vintage, so you could take your whole club for a convoy outing.

bluemountainsvintagecadillacs.com.au

HOT TUCKER AT BOILER HOUSE

The historic Hydro Majestic at Medlow Bath has always captured my imagination and been a point of fascination for many of us over the years. New owners have lifted the place entirely, so much so you could call it a rebirth, and one new addition is the Boiler House Restaurant built into the old machinery shop and steam generator building. This is where NSW's first electricity was generated — four days before Sydney itself!

Remote from the main building, with heaps of parking, it's the ideal spot for a flying lunch en route to wherever or even a turnaround point. Think hearty meat dishes like braised beef cheeks, Sicilian chicken, salads, pasta and gourmet pizzas. The tiramisu is right up there too!

hydromajestic.com.au/dining/boiler-house-cafe

GETTING HAMMERED AT HARTLEY: THE TALISMAN GALLERY

Metal artist Ron Fitzpatrick is really an old-school blacksmith with a penchant for hot metal sculptures. He forges these in the old woolshed in the historic village of Hartley on the old highway down the slope past Mt Victoria. Ron has revived the art of bashing hot iron into wacky sculptures, all of which can be purchased on the spot — or you can create your own under his tutelage. Fancy a new gothic-inspired fire poker or wall hook? Knock yourself out!

talismangallery.com.au



"...THE ART OF BASHING HOT IRON INTO WACKY SCULPTURES..."

ROUTE TIPS

The conventional wisdom for day riders is a loop up or back along the Bells Line of Road, which offers you more options like the funky Hillbilly Cider stop at Bilpin. Ask for a non-alcoholic "rider cider" and stash a six-pack for later.

If you've not been for a while, just watch the changed speed limits up and down the highway as well as the cameras at the top near Mt Victoria.

Remember the shortcut from Springwood via Winmalee to Agnes Banks (near Richmond) for a bit of relief from the weekend highway traffic. **ARR**





10 TIPS FOR BUYING SECOND-HAND

Don't buy trouble! Here are some tips to help you buy the right second-hand motorcycle

BY: NIGEL PATERSON



1

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Do your research and work out exactly which bikes will work for you. Consider what you're allowed to ride (if you're LAMS restricted) but also what you're capable of riding comfortably and safely.

Don't buy something with more power than you believe you can cope with in the hope you'll "get used to it". Be careful of seat heights, weight and the physical size of the bike — if you're not confident, you won't enjoy the ride.

"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE PRICE OF THE BIKE..."

2

CONSIDER WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

We'd all like the latest and greatest, but if money were no object you'd be looking for a new bike, so be realistic about what you can afford. It's not just about the price of the bike, but repayments if you're borrowing the money. Make sure you leave yourself enough money to maintain your bike properly and put fuel in it.

And don't get into the situation where you have to go to work so much you have no time to ride.

3

REMEMBER THE EXTRA COSTS

If you're buying your first bike, don't spend all your money on the machine — you'll need a helmet, gloves and boots as the bare minimum of extras. It's better if you have riding pants and wet weather gear as well, and then there's insurance and rego to consider too.

4

DEALER OR PRIVATE?

With all the online sales channels, from bikesales.com.au to Gumtree to eBay, it's easier than ever to buy privately – but not really any safer. Dealers not only have to oblige by various regulations (which vary by state and the value of the bike), they also have their reputation to protect (and a search on motorcycle forums can help turn up the shonky ones).

A dealer will always prepare a bike for sale – replacing worn chains, tyres etc – but how much trouble and expense they will go to varies a lot.

If you don't have much motorcycling experience and aren't connected with other riders, a dealer is also good source of advice.

5

CHECK IT'S THEIRS TO SELL AND LEGAL

For just a few dollars via the PPSR (Personal Property Securities register – ppsr.gov.au), check if there is money owing on the bike if buying privately. If you don't and there is money owing, it could be repossessed. For \$15, bikefacts.com.au is a privately owned service that also tells you if the bike has ever been written-off or stolen.



Check your tyre pressures before a test ride.



This a badly worn sprocket – the chain and both sprockets will need replacing.

"...A HELMET, GLOVES AND BOOTS AS THE BARE MINIMUM..."

6

ARE THE CONSUMABLES IN GOOD NICK?

If a bike is advertised a bit cheaper than you'd expect, there's a good chance it needs some TLC – tyres, chain, sprockets and brake pads are the most obvious parts to be neglected.

The cost of fixing those things varies widely – on a big bike it could run to more than \$1000, but on a small commuter it might only be a couple of hundred – and the cost will depend on what you can do yourself. However, a lack of love also points to a lack of maintenance, so bearings, oil changes and lots of other things might not be up to scratch. Buyer beware!

7

START IT FROM COLD

Ask the owner not to start the bike before you get there, and put your hand on the engine cases to confirm that's the case when you arrive. If the bike struggles to start, it could be a battery issue or something more serious. If it makes strange noises after firing up, you'll want to get it checked out by a mechanic or move on to something else.

These tyres have seen some track time, which can be hard on on a bike.

"...A LACK OF LOVE
ALSO POINTS
TO A LACK OF
MAINTENANCE..."

8

CHECK THE TYRE PRESSURES

Many bikes being sold have been sitting around for a while before going on the market, and the owner hasn't bothered checking tyre pressures for a while. Look up online what the tyre pressures should be and inflate them correctly before a test ride. If you don't, the bike won't handle properly and could be dangerous to ride.

9

THE TEST RIDE

If you're not comfortable taking the bike for a test ride, try to bring along a more experienced rider who is (and if you are new to riding and don't know anyone else with more experience, maybe you'd be better off buying from a dealer).

Does it go around left-hand corners as comfortably as right-handers? If not, something could be bent from a crash. Does it accelerate smoothly? Are fairing, luggage or accessory parts rattling and loose? Does the suspension feel like it's working correctly?

10

GET A GOOD DEAL

Do your homework and understand what a bike is worth. Check out the prices of replacing worn components, rego etc and use those costs as negotiating points. Don't be afraid to offer a lower price than what's being asked, but a really low-ball offer is likely to be knocked back immediately, killing any further negotiation. Be reasonable and preferably be able to justify your offer ("there's a similar bike at a dealer for the same price!").

If you know what you want, know what you can afford and buy smart, motorcycling is a lot of fun, and you're more likely to continue to ride for years to come. *ARR*

LAST OF THE BIG SPORTS-TOURERS?

Versatile, powerful and bulletproof, the FJR has been a staple of Yamaha's line-up for nearly two decades

BY: PHIL JAMES | PHOTOGRAPHY: NIGEL PATERSON

The four-cylinder pannier-equipped sports-touring bike is becoming a very rare breed, and if you'd like one with shaft drive, you're down to a single choice: the Yamaha FJR1300. Either the machines have grown extra pots (BMW K-series) or been discontinued (Honda STX, Kawasaki GTR1300, Triumph Trophy).

The four-cylinder class was popular because the machines offered more power than a twin and less weight than a six. In particular, the Kawasaki is sorely missed; it was a great platform with outdated electronics. I'd suggest that not offering cruise control sealed its fate, but hopefully something similar will make a comeback.

EVOLUTION OF THE SPORTS-TOURER

In contrast to Kawasaki, Yamaha has continued to develop the FJR, keeping it up to date and relevant. It's always been a well-loved bike and the current variant has addressed some of the old model's less-desirable features with the addition

of a sixth gear and proper suspension – welcome changes and evidence manufacturers do listen to customers.

Yamaha has always pitched the FJR as a sports-tourer, not a heavy-weight, luxo-barge. Early models were pretty cutting-edge for the class thanks to the lightweight aluminium frame, 145hp motor and sportsbike wheel and tyre sizes (more on that in my potted history of the FJR on page 114).

The 2019 model continues to be a touring bike you can get sporty on. The motor itself could double as a locomotive traction engine. Whatever the load, it feels strong. It's not explosive power like an R1, just solid relentless acceleration in all situations. There are two power modes – Sport and Tour. Tour does diminish the throttle response significantly, so I rode in Sport 90 per cent of the time... but Tour is useful if road conditions are particularly ugly or to maximise fuel range.

Talking about sixth gear in road tests isn't something you'd usually do but in the Yamaha's case... it's big news,







Left switchblock controls cruise, screen height, suspension settings, heated handgrips and lots more.

because until a couple of years back the FJR got by with five speeds. This lack of a sixth gear has always been a marketing problem for Yamaha, although not an actual problem with the bike.

Yamaha's engineers were smart, too, switching from straight-cut to helical gears in the transmission. They offer the same strength and narrower width, allowing six gearsets to fit where previously there were five. Helical gears are quieter and smoother but are more expensive to manufacture, and rare in bike gearboxes.

The AE moniker refers to the bike's electronic suspension. The previous suspension could best be described as vanilla; now it has higher-quality components and does the rest of the bike justice. It's not semi-active suspension (with constant damping adjustment). Think of it like the ECU acting as your suspension tuner with a screwdriver, making set-up changes as per your request. When stationary, spring preload can be adjusted to suit solo rider, pillion and luggage loadings, as well as fine-tuning of the three damping presets (Soft, Standard and Hard). On the move, riders can scroll through Soft to Hard damping settings to suit the situation.

THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

Yamaha first produced the FJR in 2001 and it's been the sport touring staple of the range ever since. It has been such a successful design that many of the elements of that first bike are still evident in the current model.

The 2001 model introduced the 1298cc transverse 4-cylinder engine, aluminium diamond frame, shaft drive and alloy wheels that have survived till the current model.

The engine featured forged pistons, ceramic composite cylinder coating, dual counter balancers and electronic fuel injection. Pretty serious stuff 18 years ago. They were fully equipped for the time, boasting a power-driven windscreen.

In 2003 upgrades included adjustable front forks, larger front brake rotors and ABS.

In 2006 the Gen 2 version appeared. A curved radiator, adjustable seat, longer swingarm, larger screen, lighter throttle and better fairing heat management were added, as well as new instruments and an alternator upgrade.

In 2008 there was a new clutch with lighter pull, new ABS, fuelling changes for better throttle on/off transition, and heated grips were now standard.

In 2009 there was a further upgrade to fuelling for smoother throttle response.

Gen 3 launched in 2013 with new bodywork, new cylinder liner treatment, D-mode engine maps, cruise control and traction control, introduced with YCC-T electronic throttle. LED indicators appeared and weight was reduced from Gen 2 models.

In 2016 came the Gen 4 version with the gearbox upgraded to six speed, full LED lighting, lighter pull assist and slipper clutch fitted. Electronic suspension with cornering lights became an option.

In 2019 only the electronic suspension (ES) model is available in Australia.

"...YAMAHA HAS
CONTINUED TO
DEVELOP THE FJR..."





"...LACK OF A SIXTH GEAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MARKETING PROBLEM..."

This is a long-distance beast, so good comfort is non-negotiable and I'm pleased to report Yamaha has delivered. I do like the FJR's ergonomic adjustability. Levers are adjustable for span, the seat can be lowered 20mm, 'bars can be moved forward or back over 10mm. These small adjustments do cater to most body sizes. Aftermarket "higher and/or back" 'bar mounts are available if this isn't enough.

The aero package is quite protective for a smaller rider like me. If more is required, Yamaha offers a higher screen and deflectors to direct air away from the handgrips as accessories.

Rider aids include ABS and Traction Control with two settings: on and off. No need to overthink there. The LCD dash comprehensively covers distance travelled and fuel usage info. One nice touch is an "elapsed time since stop" display – handy for fatigue management. Navigation through menus to drive the suspension, screen, heated grips and rider information is quite intuitive. Several detailed options for heated grip and suspension adjustment are only available in submenus when stationary. The heated grips can be fine-tuned over 10 different heat levels. For example, if you find high is too hot, you can dial it back a bit in the submenu.

Cruise control is driven from the left switch block – it's effective and easy to use. Night vision is assisted with lean-angle cornering lights in addition to the LED headlights (they're good lights too). There are knobs below the dash to allow easy headlight aim adjustment. Very handy at night if your pillion decides to walk home, or even better... if you meet one.

THE RIDE

I had the pleasure of riding the FJR for a few thousand kilometres on the open road and in urban conditions. It was cold, I got rained on and battled severe crosswinds. There were motorways, country roads and twisties (the famed Oxley Highway).

I was surprised by its capability in urban conditions, apart from the pannier restriction to lane filtering. It's quite easy to handle. I shouldn't have been surprised – there's a reason why the NSW Highway Patrol use them.

Yamaha offers a clutchless variant of this bike in other markets, but it didn't sell well here and has been dropped from the range, which is a shame. I'd like to see it here, as clutching in slow-moving traffic is a bit tiring, despite having a hydraulic clutch. Country road riding would be less fatiguing with smoother cornering.



The FJR's brakes are only OK, hard braking riders may want to look for pads with more bite.



Analog tacho, digital speedo, LCD info panel – easy to read and use, although not as fancy as many bikes these days.







"...THE MOTOR ITSELF
COULD DOUBLE
AS A LOCOMOTIVE
TRACTION ENGINE..."



The panniers are awesome, carrying heaps and tucking in well to the side of the bike.



LED lighting abounds on the modern FJR1300.



Out of fashion but very good to use hydraulic clutch with adjustable lever.

I found the bike to be very comfortable (as you'd expect). Unless you're very short, I'd recommend setting the seat in its higher position. I'm only 168cm and in the lower setting got leg cramps after a few hours; sure, it made the bike easier to manoeuvre, but I think all-day comfort is more important. The screen may be a bit short for many riders; I didn't get buffeting but there was noise.

As mentioned above, I spent hours riding in the rain and stayed pretty dry, so the screen/fairing combo delivers in that regard. That fairing also provides a level of stability at speed an adventure bike could only dream of. The mass of the bike and low profile significantly helped with crosswinds. If you've done a long trip on a windy day, you'll know how tiring it can be, so this ability is welcome.

I'll rate the seat as a pass, but no more. After two days on a motorway, I was looking for my Aspirin. Yamaha has a comfort seat option (this is becoming the industry norm and it's not a good thing), which should be standard.

This is a heavy bike and many owners will load it up with a pillion and luggage for big trips. In that situation, the brakes are a bit marginal in terms of stopping power. Feel is good, but I think there's an opportunity for improvement here — better pads would be a start.

I have to mention the gearbox. The additional gear (which drops rpm by 10 per cent) makes for smoother cruising but it's a case of swings and round-a-bouts. Roll-on acceleration is a little duller than the earlier five-speed machine.

All things considered, the additional gear is better. I was super impressed with the quality of the gearchange — light, positive and slick, as good as any large displacement bike I've ridden. The Assist and Slipper clutch is lighter than previously and makes smooth downshifting easy.

ELECTRONIC SUSPENSION

The suspension has a wide range of adjustment and it would be rare for a rider not to be able to find a set-up to their liking.

The default settings are good. If the road was rough I just went to the Soft setting. The ride was plush with barely a hint of suspension wallow. If twisties came along, I selected Hard to tighten it all up, making the bike more responsive to inputs. Most riders could leave it in Standard and be happy most of the time. In fact, the suspension is so good I reckon you'd have to go semi-active to make it better on a big bike like the FJR.

So can a 290kg, longish wheelbase (1545cm) bike be sporty? Yes, it can. The suspension really lifts the bike. Its turn rate in tight corners is slower than a smaller bike, but its mass and wheelbase give it an edge on rough high-speed sweepers (where a smaller bike might get twitchy). That mass also helps on wet roads by squeezing the water from beneath the tyre. Looking at the bike, you might form the view that cornering clearance could be a limitation, but I got to the edge of the tyres before the hero knobs touched, so it's good enough (just keep your toes up). Overall,

"...I RECKON YOU'D
HAVE TO GO SEMI-
ACTIVE TO MAKE
IT BETTER..."





I was impressed with its mix of agility and stability. Only a suicidal sportsbike rider would gap a seasoned FJR pilot. Remember that if law enforcement takes an interest in you...

It's fine the way it is, but if Yamaha really wanted to gold plate the bike, I'd suggest tyre pressure monitoring, a brake upgrade, seat heating and up/down quick shift (or the clutchless FJR1300 AS model). It would really be at the pointy end then.

The FJR is a special bike. It's fast and comfortable, usually mutually exclusive capabilities. Currently it's pretty well

in a class of its own. If you want fully featured, multi-cylinder, shaft drive, and less than 300kg, it only has one distant competitor – the Triumph Tiger 1200 XR. The Triumph doesn't have 17in wheels, is taller, and trades some on-road capability for less stress on gravel roads. If you don't like gravel roads, go for the Yamaha.

There you have it. The Yamaha, at \$30,649 ride-a-way, isn't cheap, but it delivers on the sports-touring promise and it's built like the proverbial brick shithouse. You'll only have to buy one; it's likely you'll wear out before it does! **ARR**

SPECIFICATIONS

2019 YAMAHA FJR1300AE

ENGINE

Type: Forward inclined, inline 4 cylinder, 4-stroke, liquid cooling system, double overhead camshafts (DOHC), four valves per cylinder.

Capacity: 1298cc

Bore x stroke: 79 x 66.2mm

Compression ratio: 10.8:1

Engine management: Electronic Fuel Injection with YCC-T & Transister Controlled Ignition

PERFORMANCE

Claimed maximum power: 144 HP (105 kW) at 8,000 rpm

Claimed maximum torque: 138 Nm at 7,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type: 6-speed constant mesh

Final drive: Shaft drive

Clutch: Assist and Slipper multi-plate wet clutch

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR

Chassis: Aluminium Diamond

Front suspension: Upside-down telescopic forks, 135mm travel

Rear suspension: Swingarm (link suspension), 125mm travel

Front brakes: Hydraulic dual discs, 320mm - ABS

Rear brake: Hydraulic single disc, 282mm - ABS

Tyre Front: 120/70ZR17M/C (58W) Tubeless

Tyre Rear: 180/55ZR17M/C(73W) Tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Rake: 26°

Trail: 109mm

Claimed wet weight: 292kg

Seat height: 805 / 825mm

Wheelbase: 1545mm

Fuel capacity: 25L

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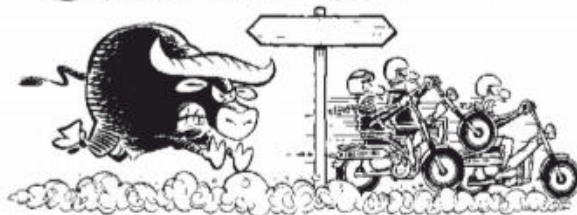

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109, BY MISTAKE

Buying a bike you've only seen online can be fraught with issues...

BY: RON HILL



Other than having a Honda 250 "Dream" in the early '70s, I had a very late introduction to road motorcycles and had never even sat on a cruiser. I had owned and rode several trail bikes in my 20s and had assisted with mustering on my son's property. I still had the old Suzuki TS 185 that I preferred to ride when on the station. Those 400s were just too high to get my weary old legs over and were too big for me to manhandle in the sand hills.

Just prior to my 60th birthday a friend bought a Harley and set about trying to convince me that a Sunday ride would be a great idea. Coffee runs, the occasional weekend trip, wind in the face, free spirit, you know... all the general positives associated with riding a motorcycle. The idea took hold like a weed in fertile soil and I was starting to really warm to the idea. My wife, Liz, on the other hand, was not convinced, but was prepared to go along with another one of my "great" ideas.

A 2007 Harley Sportster came up at a local Ford dealer, the planets aligned, and with major reservations Liz agreed that it may be something we could both enjoy together. By my 60th birthday I was the owner of a 1200cc Harley-Davidson. WOW, a 1200! I can remember when a 900 Kwaka was a monster!

We spent 12 months on the Sportster, suspension bottoming out with the two of

us aboard, Liz burning her leg on the oil tank during summer rides, and I became a master at riding on a 45-degree angle during strong cross-winds. The Sportster was a great bike to get me back into serious riding, but it became very clear that I needed something bigger as I was doing the majority of my riding on the highway.

Bigger... well why not just go the whole hog (no pun intended) and look for a BIG cruiser. Something like a lounge chair on wheels. How much different could it be to the Sportster?

Oh, ignorance is bliss.

With very limited funds I started my search, visited local dealers, checked the classifieds and finally found something at a Melbourne dealer that fitted the criteria. Looks cool, has all the touring gear, plenty of power, should do the trick. Weight... yeah, maybe a bit heavy at 385kg, but hey, there are heavier bikes and other people seem to handle them alright. I checked all the reviews, absorbed all the comments that supported why this bike was the one and rejected any that were negative. What would they know — probably biased anyway.

After several emails to the dealer they made a final offer that was acceptable and we organised a day to pick up the new bike. Liz and I loaded the Sportster on the trailer and drove over six hours to Melbourne to pick up a 2009 C109RT Suzuki Boulevard.

We arrived in Melbourne about lunch time on a cold, wet day (fancy that in Melbourne) and headed straight to the dealer. Walked into the used bike showroom but couldn't see the bike — there was this great big battleship thing in the way. Took a second look. Of course, the battleship was my new bike.

Wow, wasn't expecting something quite so big... it made the Sportster look like my little trail bike. I had never seen Liz so excited over a motor bike, or much else except perhaps her sewing machine. Her eyes were like saucers, her jaw was moving up and down but nothing was coming out. She loved it, she was speechless. I then realised she didn't love it — she was terrified of it! She viewed this thing like the devil incarnate.

I must admit her reaction didn't do much to boost my failing confidence. Oh well, nothing to do except put on a brave face and convince her that this thing was exactly

what I had expected and I could handle it, no worries. I sat on the bike, felt the weight and with great effort convinced myself this was just what I was after.

I did glance a few times at the much smaller Moto Guzzi Californian parked two bikes over. Probably more my size but a bit dearer, and not wanting to look like a wimp, I stuck fast to my decision. I had a test ride around the car park, signed some papers, parted with a little bit of cash and I was the owner of a Suzuki C109RT Boulevard.

I have had the Boulevard for 18 months now and done over 14,000km. I had a few scary moments getting familiar with the bike and I realised quite quickly its size and power demand respect. I practised all the areas that the training videos suggested, like emergency braking, doing U-turns and tight turns without putting your feet down and riding within my capabilities. My confidence has grown and I am really enjoying the HMAS Bully.

Basically two Kwaka 900s (still have trouble getting my head around that), 109 cubic inches of Suzuki race technology, about 120ft/lbs of torque, a deep rumbling exhaust note and the classic styling with all that chrome make riding this bike so enjoyable. When I'm coming down the highway I'm Easy Rider reborn, or maybe it's Wild Hogs; either way I look pretty cool. Well I think so anyway.

I have spent most Sundays riding somewhere, mainly to a coffee shop or other venue to sit for hours drinking coffee, solving global issues and generally stretching the truth. Joining the local Ulysses chapter was a great move, with organised rides and camaraderie with like-minded people. Although I mostly ride solo, Liz has been on a few rides and, although still a bit intimidated, she agrees that it is much more comfortable than the Sportster.

The bike came with a Cobra exhaust and had been chipped. I have added crash bars, driving lights, power outlet, alarm and fender tips. Other than a set of hard bags down the track, there is not much more I would change.

So would I consider getting rid of the 109 and getting something a bit smaller, less powerful and easier to handle? You must be joking, I love it. Would I suggest taking on a bike of this size with the limited experience I had? No Way.

Am I sorry I did? NOT ONE BIT.

Like to tell the world about your motorcycling experiences? It could be about a bike, a journey or the people you've met. Pitch your idea to the editor: npaterson@umco.com.au.



First week of owning my cbr 650 – Jaymee Hagelstein



My Triumph Tiger 800 XRX 2019.
Bloody love it! – David Cauchi

My new baby – Glenn Turner



THAT BIKE OF YOURS



My 2009 Street Triple being attacked by a giant Lobster in Kingston SE. – Timbo Radford

2015 Triumph Explorer, Sugar Pine Walk Tumbarumba – Ja Mie Pe Ter Mooney



Off the Spirit in Devonport, Poring Rain so turn right at Deloraine for a short cut.. Highland Lakes Road before they sealed it. 2000 VN1500Fi Not the best Adventure Tourer but got the job done – Ian Fleming



2003 Honda CBR954 Fireblade, Skennars Head, Ballina, NSW – Maurice Burgess



My Speedtwin at Picturesque Elephant Rock, Emerald – John Regester



2006 Yamaha FJR1300. Coast to Coast crossing taken at Nullarbor Roadhouse, SA (5/9/19) – Michael Turek



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LOOKING BACK



THE INTERNET'S HAILWOOD REPLICA

Mike Hailwood has gone down in history as one of the most talented riders to ever wear leathers, and still has one of the best Grand Prix records of anyone, despite being forced to sit-out numerous seasons for contractual reasons.

He was effectively forced into semi-retirement and eventually moved to car racing.

In the late seventies Hailwood made a comeback to motorcycle racing, winning the 1978 Formula 1 race on a Ducati 900SS.

He retired for good in 1979.

After nine world championship titles, 76 GP victories, 14 Isle of Man TT wins and a career which also included Formula 1, "Mike The Bike" was killed in a motor car accident in 1981, colliding with a truck which had



made an illegal turn in front of him.

Jump forward a couple of years and Ducati introduced the Mike Hailwood replica, a 900SS with a full fairing which was recognised as a collectable when new and are now highly prized.

Then in 2000, while Ducati was still recovering from dismal sales and profitability through much of the 1990s, the company introduced the MH900e – the small 'e' representing 'evoluzione' (evolution).

An odd-looking beast bearing almost no resemblance to the original 900MHR, it's debatable if the bike would have sold well at all if it wasn't named after Hailwood, but that's something we'll never know – but Pauline Hailwood, Mike's widow, sued Ducati over the name. The case was settled.

What did happen was Ducati decided to sell the bike online, with the first 1000 units selling in 31 minutes. Only 2000 were built, after production delays.

LOOKING FORWARD

I'm finding it interesting that although I can never get my inbox under control, email messages from readers are drying up.

As the handwritten letter did so years back, people are gravitating to the path of least resistance, in this case Facebook – I've put a few posts up lately which have received heaps of great comments, tips and humour, like the funny people suggesting thongs when I asked for ventilated boots.

The couple of times I've asked for pictures of people's bikes via Facebook

I've been smashed with far more than I can use in the magazine – so I think in the future we might open up that section to more images.

I've also received a handful of articles from readers writing about their bikes, which I'd love to see more of – but the pictures haven't been strong, so maybe I need to write an article on how to take good shots of your bike, even if all you have is a Smartphone... hmm, maybe I'll post that question to Faceache...

I'm really enjoying the increased interaction I'm getting with readers through Facebook, so I hope you will join us there and comment on the posts, let us know what you really think.

I'd also love to know about you and your bike – why you bought it, how it has or hasn't lived up to expectations, what you'd change, how long you plan to keep it... and I need a few pictures, too.

Send it all in to npaterson@umco.com.au and I'll publish whatever I can.



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