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cyclist torque

AUGUST 2017
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ROYAL ENFIELD HIMALAYAN
Curried Adventure



BMW G 310 R
Inspirational Learner

WELCOME

August 2017

Welcome to the August edition of Cycle Torque.

In this issue you'll find launch reports of the Ducati SuperSport, Royal Enfield Himalayan and BMW G 310 R.

The SuperSport is Ducati's answer to sports-touring, and it's so confident that the marque is calling the SuperSport a 'Road Sport' bike. We hit the road and track to find out just how 'Road Sport' it really is...

Take the road less travelled with Royal Enfield's Himalayan, as the Indian manufacturer brings its olde world charm to adventure. It won't get you there the quickest, but boy it allows you to have a lot of fun in the process.

BMW is fashionably late to the learner segment with its G 310 R roadster. Its take offers something different, plenty of attitude and halves the minimum age requirement to buy into the propeller shaft badge. Best of all, it's cost-effective fun!

Also featured in the issue is a report on Metzeler's MC360 mid-soft and mid-hard enduro/MX tyre. Metzeler has been at pains to make its off-road tyre more versatile, and it's succeeded, because the competition-level tyres are street-legal too.

Elsewhere in the issue you'll find lots of news, new products and much more.

Enjoy.

– Ryan Grubb
Editor

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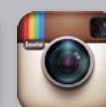
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Ridden

BMW G 310 R

36



Ducati SuperSport and SuperSport S

50



Royal Enfield Himalayan

60



Features

28



Metzeler MC360 Tyre Launch

Regulars

06 NEWS

27 EDITORIAL

78 BIKE STUFF

80 BOOK SHOP

82 MARKET TORQUE

83 RIDE DAYS & TOURS

88 LETTERS

90 CREDITS

Cover Photos: Ducati by iKapture, Royal Enfield by Jeff Crow



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Kawasaki's 2018 MXers are ready to rumble



Kawasaki has announced its 2017 KX250F and 450F motocrossers are now available in Australia.

The 250 receives most of the updates for the model year, with updates to the engine and suspension.

KX250F

Adding to its engine and chassis performance, the 2018 KX250F offers a more powerful engine, combined with the narrow chassis, and slim ergonomics, Kawasaki claims this is their fastest 250 yet.

Kawasaki reckons the new bike is easier to maintain rpm when launching off the line, and thanks to the improved torque the revs tend to drop less when shifting.

It's also the lightest KX250F ever, weighing in at 104.7kg.

Kawasaki even claims the 2018 KX250F is quicker out of the gate, hitting the 60m mark 2m ahead of its predecessor.

Features:

249 cc liquid-cooled, four-stroke single-cylinder engine – features a shorter intake duct for more power and torque.

New intake camshaft, larger diameter header pipe, reduced compression ratio and new throttle body enhance midrange and top end performance.

Updated race-ready Separate Function front Fork (SFF) Type 2 with self-lubricating alumite coating that reduces friction and promotes smooth fork action.

Fine-tuned rear suspension settings deliver improved bump absorption and suspension action, making it easier for riders to trace their

Continued >



intended line through corners.

Minimalist bodywork, very slim radiator shrouds, a flat seat and tank, a narrow frame and smooth seamless design makes it easier for riders to move around.

Flexible ergonomics including adjustable handlebar and footpeg positions.

Launch control system maximises traction at the start gate.

Quick and easy engine tuning with three DFI couplers (plugs) giving a choice of different engine maps.

Genuine Kawasaki accessories available including handheld KX FI Calibration Controller.

RRP: \$10,599 (+ pre-delivery).

Colour: Lime Green with factory-style graphics.



Continued >

< Kawasaki's 2018 MXers are ready to rumble continued

KX450F

Sports the same revisions from the 2016 model, the light and powerful 2018 KX450F provides sharp handling and strong circuit performance.

Features:

Strong, powerful four-stroke, liquid cooled, single-cylinder engine with high performance cylinder head and intake valves plus offset cylinder design.

Weighs only 108.8kg, which contributes to quicker turn-in and sharper handling.

Aluminium perimeter frame with high rigidity is ultra slim and light.

The minimalist bodywork includes slim radiator shrouds thanks to the angled radiators, an extremely flat seat and tank, plus smooth and seamless styling making it easier for riders to move around.

Advanced suspension technology featuring factory-racer-style SFF-Air TAC (Triple Air Chamber) fork.

Adjustable ergonomics with four position handlebar and two position footpegs.

Quick and easy engine tuning with three

DFI couplers (plugs) giving a choice of different engine maps.

Oversized 270 mm petal disc brake delivers strong stopping power and excellent controllability.

KX Calibration Kit allows factory style tuning at the palm of your hand (optional genuine accessory).

Holeshot advantage with launch control.

RRP: \$11,599 (+ pre-delivery).

Colours: Lime Green with factory-style graphics. ■



WATCH
THE
KX450F
VIDEO





BMW GS Experience bookings open

The BMW Motorrad GS Experience test ride program is back again in 2017 with bookings now open for the Queensland Experience at Canungra.

The initiative offers riders an opportunity to experience the capabilities of BMW Motorrad's legendary GS range in its natural environment.

Conducted over a combination of bitumen and undemanding off-road trails the GS Experience showcases the dynamic qualities of each GS model in real-world conditions, impossible to replicate on a short, city test ride.

Each test ride includes a briefing and demonstration that will take riders through the GS range's array of technology.

The demonstrations cover ABS, traction control, automatic stability control, riding modes, electronic suspension adjustment,

quickshifter and other technologies.

BMW Motorrad staff will be on-hand to answer any questions and provide general adventure riding advice.

The full range of BMW GS motorcycles will be available to test, from the F 700 GS to the R 1200 GS Adventure, and for the first time the new R 1200 GS Rallye X.

The fee is \$49 and covers two test rides, refreshments and a limited-edition BMW Motorrad GS Experience t-shirt.

BMW Motorrad advises riders to book a test on their chosen models as soon as possible, as places will be quickly snapped up.

To make a booking - email your expression of interest to GSexperience@bmw.com.au

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Indian announces the ‘raw’ Scout Bobber

A bobber is a stripped-down motorcycle, one which not only has no superfluous parts, but one which also has some legally-required parts cut-down to their legal limits.

Bobbers were born back in the 1950s as young riders found reducing weight was often cheaper than increasing performance, so taking a hacksaw to mud guards (they were all metal in those days), dumping mufflers, ditching pillion seats and throwing centrestands helped them beat their mates, especially in drag races.

These days the only real reason to strip off parts is for the style, and enough riders have been doing it that the manufacturers have really noticed the trend

You can now buy a number of bobbers from your local dealer – Harley-Davidson has a few single-seat motorcycles in its line-up including the 48 and 883 Iron – they might not be called bobbers, but they fit into the class. There’s also the Street Bob Big Twin.

Even Moto Guzzi has the V9 Bobber.

Triumph really raised the profile of the bobber with its T120 Bonneville-based machine. With its solo saddle (which appears to float in mid-air), hidden rear shock, wire wheels and shotgun exhausts, the Triumph Bobber has a classic British look and feel.

Continued >



Indian might be late to the party, but has made a spectacular entrance.

Based on the Scout, the V-twin motor is the highlight of the machine, although using underslung bar-end mirrors on drag-style 'bars has kept the profile of the bike looking long and low.

“The Scout Bobber is our most raw and mean machine to date, and the ultimate in the celebration of what motorcycling is about – a powerful engine, two wheels, and no plans of where to go,” said Peter Harvey, Country Manager – Indian Motorcycle.

“It’s an incredibly fun motorcycle that delivers a ton of attitude, along with a ton of power.”

The press release about the bike emphasises the style:

The Scout Bobber features a black headlight nacelle, minimal engine covers and vented

exhaust shields. A black gauge face on its instrument panel and black exhaust further adds to its blacked-out styling. The new block letter logo on the tank compliments the muscular look of the bike.

Chopped fenders front and rear and a new two-tone genuine leather bobber seat enhance the minimalistic styling. Add Scout Bobber’s raw styling to an American V-Twin high performance engine and this motorcycle quickly becomes more of a tool than an extravagance, enabling the rider to fully embrace the thrill of twisting the throttle and enjoying the journey rather than the destination.

The new Scout Bobber will be available in Australia late October from \$18,995 ride away. Five colours, including Thunder Black, Star Silver Smoke, Bronze Smoke, Indian Motorcycle Red, and Thunder Black Smoke are available. ■

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NEWS TORQUE

36th Thunder Rally roars ahead

The Ducati Owners Club of NSW has announced the details of the 36th Thunder Rally, being held in Nundle, October 27-29.

The rally is being held to raise money for Royal Rehab, a disability support network.

There will be a huge raffle with lots of prizes to be won.

For more information, contact Vinnie Buck on 0412 366 781.

www.ducatiownersclubnsw.com.au

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Indian Motorcycle's 1 in 50 promotion

Indian Motorcycle is back with its Weekend Escape and it's giving you a one in 50 chance to win the price of your new bike back.

The promotion allows you to take an Indian Motorcycle of your choice on a two-day test ride.

The company even provides an accommodation voucher and a full tank of fuel.

The initiative gives riders a much greater opportunity to experience the bike on a trip that emulates Indian Motorcycle ownership.

If you fall in love with the Indian and buy one, then you get the chance to win back the whole cost of your bike.



The offer applies to both new and demonstrator-models.

The contest will run until the end of September or until 50 qualifying Indian motorcycles are sold in each showroom.

<https://www.1in50.com.au>

Ducati's last V-twin?



Ducati has unveiled the finished product of its highly-successful v-twin superbike engine with the 1299 Panigale R Final Edition.

Although it hasn't been announced officially, the statement all-but-confirms the Bologna-based company will produce a V4 superbike in 2018.

It's a Final Edition, remember.

The bike is a celebration of the company's earlier victories, the first of which was the 851, with many more superbike championships being won throughout Ducati's development of the Desmoquattro and Testastretta V-twin engine designs.

The later-model Panigales with its Superquadro engine hasn't had the same championship-winning success (although it's won lots of races) as its earlier lineage which has to be partly why Ducati's decided to pull the pin on the V-twin.

Nonetheless, seeing the concept come to a conclusion, rather than it being dumped altogether not only provides a sense of completion for Ducatisti, but it could well become an object of collectors' desires.

The 1299 Panigale R Final Edition will be

available as a numbered (but not limited) series, Euro 4 compliant road bike with shedloads of engine performance and precise racing suspension.

The engine is an offshoot of the 1299 Superleggera engine, and it packs a claimed 209 hp at 11,000 rpm and torque of 142 Newtons at 9,000 rpm.

The chassis set-up is the same as that on the Panigale R, with Öhlins mechanical suspension and a 24° rake.

As for electronics, the 1299 Panigale R Final Edition features the Bosch Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU) and ABS Cornering, Ducati Wheelie Control EVO (DWC EVO), Ducati Traction Control EVO (DTC EVO), Engine Brake Control (EBC) and Ducati Quick Shift (DQS).

These systems are set according to the selected Riding Mode (Race, Sport and Wet) and can be personalised as desired.

The Final Edition emulates Ducati's earlier 'Tricolore' models with a red, white and green colour scheme with red wheels.

There is no word from Ducati on price at the moment. ■

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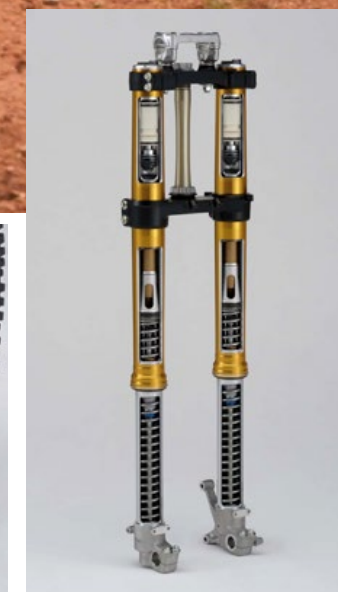


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Suzuki's 2018 450 motocrosser announced



Suzuki has lifted the lid on its 2018 RM-Z450 motocrosser: a redesigned engine, new frame, electronics, suspension, wheels and tyres are amongst the changes.



The engine

Suzuki claims the redesigned engine has more low-end torque, a flatter overall torque curve, faster and yet more controllable throttle response, and more peak power.

The air-filter aperture is 30-percent larger for enhanced airflow, while the outlet tube leading from the airbox to the fuel-injection throttle body is also straighter, reducing intake resistance for increased power across the rev range.

The throttle body has also changed, providing a more uniform fuel-air mixture for more power while providing a smoother throttle feel.

Increased fuel-pump pressure strengthens the air-fuel mix for enhanced response, and the elimination of a throttle linkage improves throttle feel.

Frame, swingarm and chassis

The all-new lightweight frame and swingarm significantly is claimed to improve turning performance by relocating the pipe point 10mm back, resulting in a shorter wheelbase.

Weight distribution has been brought forward to increase agility and stability.

The frame has a more rectangular cross-section for the main spars to improve fore-aft rigidity and optimise overall stiffness, Suzuki has also shaved 700g of weight.

Swingarm upgrades include thinner materials for a 100g weight reduction and optimised rigidity.

Additional chassis upgrades include new seat rails with hexagonal tubing for slimmer dimensions and to increase stiffness.

The revised seat-rail shape also allows more airbox capacity and easier air-cleaner service.

Suspension, wheels and tyres

It has also provided more space to fit a Showa Balance Free Rear Cushion (BFRC) shock.

Up front, an updated 49mm Showa coil-spring fork based on works design replaces the separate function air fork of the previous-generation RM.

The Showa BFRC shock shares technology with the 2018 GSX-R1000R sportsbike and is also the first production motocross bike to feature this new shock seen on factory race bikes as standard equipment.

The design balances pressure above and below the piston to better control the stroke and smooth out reactions to bumps and chop, even under heavy braking.

Lighter wheel rims and new Bridgestone Battlecross X30 tyres maximise grip for improved agility and control in a wide range of track conditions.

Finished in durable black for a factory look, the new rims have an optimised cross section, which maintains strength while also reducing

Continued >

< Suzuki's 2018 450 motocrosser announced. Continued



critical rotating mass by 70g total.

A larger 270mm wave disc up-front improves stopping performance.

Electronics

The third-generation electronics systems works to get as much power to the ground as possible.

So the engine control module (ECM) automatically adjusts ignition timing and fuel injection based on throttle position, engine speed and gear position.

The traction management system first debuted for 2008 RM-Z450, and was revised in 2013.

The third-generation traction management system's ECU features processes data 1.5-times faster and has 2.5-times more memory capacity than the first-generation system.

Riders can adjust the engine performance to suit varied track conditions.

By plugging in either of two additional fuel-setting couplers, riders can opt for a richer-than-stock or leaner-than-stock fuel setting to make the most of any riding conditions.

Included with the bike, these couplers can be easily plugged in trackside.



Pricing, colours and availability

The 2018 RM-Z450 has a fresh new look which projects a dynamic arrow form extending from the front fender through the radiator shrouds.

The all-new 2018 RM-Z450 is expected to arrive in Australia this Spring with final specifications and pricing being confirmed closer to launch.

It's available in Suzuki Yellow with new team graphics and logos.

For further information on the 2018 Suzuki RM-Z450 interested customers should visit their local Suzuki dealer, who can be found through its online Dealer Locator at www.suzukimotorcycles.com.au ■

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Kawasaki

Kawasaki kicks-off 2017 Team Green ride days

Kawasaki Australia has hailed its first Team Green ride day for the year a success, with over 90 riders turning out to Lakeside Raceway, Queensland.

The Team Green ride day moves on to Broadford Raceway, September 7; and Wakefield Park Raceway, December 4.

Kawasaki Australia said it subsidised the cost of the event to help create a friendly environment for likeminded Kawasaki enthusiasts to converge and participate in an activity they are passionate about.

A mix of experienced track day riders and first timers were in attendance.

Kylie Sage, an experienced track day rider, brought her beloved Z750, whilst encouraging a group of friends to come along.

"The day gave us an opportunity to ride on the track which I love to do so we couldn't say no," Kylie, Queensland coordinator for the Black Dog Ride, said.

"Everyone was really nice and helpful.

"I came with my girlfriend, the Kawasaki team helped us with loading our bikes and everyone just had a really fun time."

Kylie also has a hand in running the KYSA Moto Bikes ladies riding group which encourages females to race and ride motorcycles as well as provide support for female learner riders in Queensland.

Track day first timer, Ryan De Roo brought along his Ninja H2, saying, "I saw this event pop up on the Kawasaki Facebook page and I thought it was a good opportunity to experience the full potential of my H2 on a track."

"The cost to attend was very attractive and the idea of a full on race track experience was very enticing," said Ryan, who has even customised his Ninja with an aftermarket exhaust and tuning modifications.

"The day was good fun, I built some more confidence in my riding and my bike, the Kawasaki head office team were so involved and easy to talk to plus the prize giveaway was great!" Ryan said.

Matthew Dawson was not new to the track but his Kawasaki Z1000 made its track debut at the Lakeside Raceway KTGA event.

"Getting out there on the track and having a blast was the best part of the day.



"It was great value and that made it easier," said Matthew who was tearing it up with his Z1000 featuring an Akrapovič exhaust, short levers, an aftermarket screen and a few other mods.

"I spoke to numerous people and they were all really approachable.

"We had a chat about our bikes and the event.

"Garshon from the Kawasaki QLD sales team has a Z1000 as well and we were having a chat about what he has done with his which was handy," Matthew commented.

Robert Walker, Kawasaki Motors Australia's National Sales and Marketing Manager, said "It has been sensational to see the strong turnout at our KTGA track days but it is more warming to experiencing the light-hearted interaction and fun that participants have at these events."

"The events facilitate for all types of riders, from track day beginners to advanced racers who are getting some practice in.

"Some Kawasaki Australia staff members got onto the track to mix it up with the KTGA riders on the day as well!"

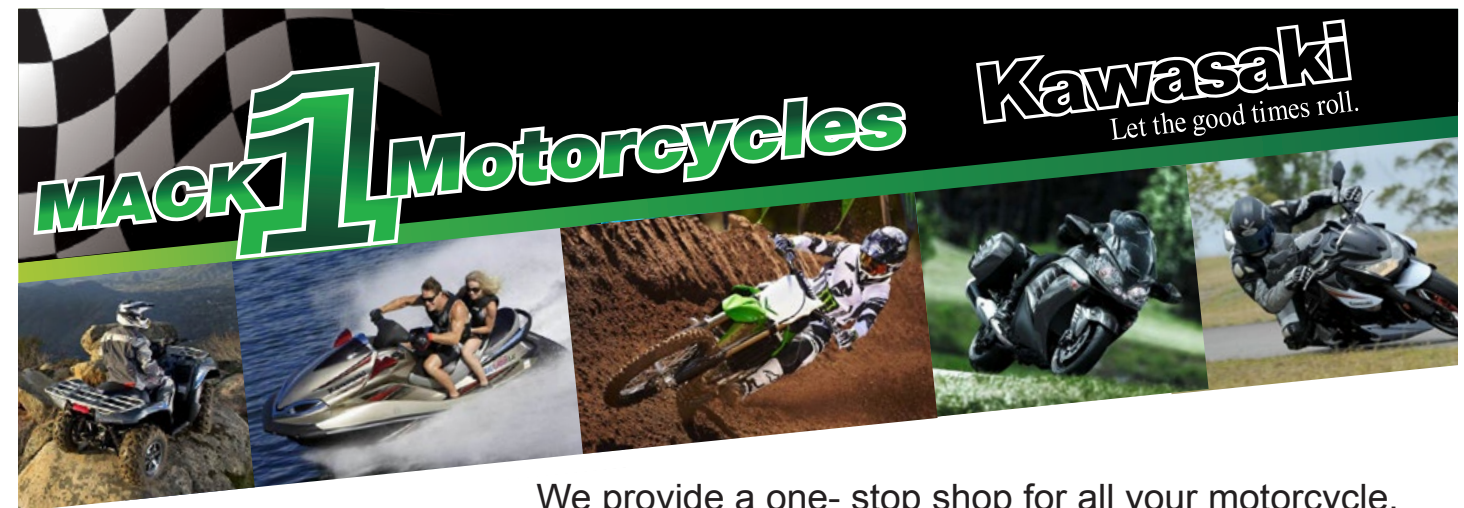
"Our partners at Champion's Ride Days also cater for those who don't have their own track machines by offering Kawasaki bikes for hire.

"On the whole, the feedback we receive from our ride days has been very positive and this encourages us to continue running these events."

For information and to book a position in our upcoming 2017 KTGA Track Events, follow the links below:

[KTGA VIC Track Day – Broadford Raceway – Thursday 7th September 2017](#)

[KTGA NSW Track Day – Wakefield Park Raceway – Monday 4th December 2017](#)



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Honda Goldwing affected by Takata airbag

Honda Australia has received official notification of an airbag recall for all 2008, 2009, 2010 and subsequently 2012 Honda Goldwing GL1800 models, in the wake of the global Takata inflator issue.

Honda can confirm all replacement parts are in stock and of the 522 Goldwing units that have been affected in Australia, 163 of these have been successfully repaired and fitted with new inflators.

Customers have been contacted up to 3 times, including 378 phone calls to owners who provided their phone numbers on purchase.

Honda urges remaining customers who are yet to respond to these contacts to be in touch to ensure their unit is rectified.

The manufacturer is also asking you to keep a lookout for Goldwings on the road – and politely ask the owner if they've had their airbag changed.

Some of these units may have been sold by the original owner and could be in the hands of second and third owners.

Honda said it is working with relevant government authorities to obtain the most current contact details in efforts to also be in touch with these newer owners. ■



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EDITORIAL

Take me home, country roads...

In the middle of August last year, it was just after lunch when I stopped at Dorrigo to scoff down a works burger before the realisation set in just how far I was from home.

I'd just driven a van containing a 959 Panigale from Nana Glen over surfaces I wouldn't dare ride a Panigale. Nigel and I were coming home from the Multistrada Enduro launch and thought we'd film some of the spectacular dirt roads on the way back. When you're in a Renault Trafic, your patience for spectacular dirt roads wears quite thin but there's not much you can do about that.

Nigel and I had just finished shooting, he said he'd meet me at Dorrigo. No worries...

By the time I got there I was disheveled from the aches and bumps of the van and a long, winding dirt road. Nigel had made it there on the Multistrada 45 minutes before me. He was sitting by an old fireplace warming the entire café. He'd finished lunch, had a leak, a coffee and got fuel. His spirits were up. Mine were down.

"Wanna swap?" he said.

"Sure," I replied.

I knew I was going to be up against it. Taking Waterfall Way to ride the Pacific Highway back to Newcastle wasn't an option. It's boring. And they were doing lots of roadwork in the area at the time.

That only leaves the 'longer' way: Dorrigo to Ebor, Armidale, Walcha, Gloucester, Newcastle. It was riskier too. You don't want to be travelling anywhere near the Barrington Tops after dark in August. It gets cold there. In a pair of jeans, a mid-layer shirt and summer jacket, I wasn't really equipped to do cold very well. I figured if kept it nailed the whole way home, I'd make it to Gloucester by twilight. The winter chill would only improve from there towards the coast.

So its after 1pm and I'm burning daylight, I exchange pleasantries with Nige' and hit the road.

The section from Dorrigo to Ebor flies, but I can't believe how cold it is getting already. I look at Multistrada's temperature gauge. Eight degrees, seven degrees, six degrees... The bike's handwarmers go on low, I keep telling myself it's not that cold, which sort-of works.

As I approach Armidale's city limits I start respecting the speed limit. For some reason I always see plenty of Highway Patrol cars in this part of the New England. This journey is no different. I stop for a moment to check how far it is to Walcha - the Multi still has enough range for the short trip.

I really enjoy this time-attack style of riding, and there's something cathartic about doing it alone. The combination of setting yourself a challenge and the skill it takes to ride accordingly really allows you to focus and puts you in the zone.

While I enjoy being alone on long, hard trips I prefer being accompanied by some music. I like to pick an album and play it in full. I sing along to keep the rest of my concentration occupied.

By the time I get to Walcha I need some fuel and something to eat. I look at the clock and I'm going to struggle to make it over the mountain before dark. I take my jacket off and it is nearly freezing, just two degrees. I love passing through the town but this stop is strictly business...

I fill up with my servo food of choice - a chocolate-flavoured Up N Go - the one which claims it's got the goodness of a packet of WeetBix inside... I'm also a sucker for a KitKat Chunky. I manage to fit a bottle of water in the Multi's handlebar bag I only took a few sips from.

I don't recommend chasing daylight over Thunderbolts Way in the golden hour of a winter's afternoon. The sun is blinding and the road is braille. However it's the most spectacular time of the day to see the Northern Tablelands in its utmost glory.

The logging trucks have knocked off for the day, so it's an uninterrupted run for the most part.

The sun starts to disappear at Brett, about 40km out from Gloucester. That temperature gauge - it drops to one degree. I start to feel just as solitary.

When I stop at Gloucester for fuel, I have an awkward interaction with the service station attendant. I'm weary. She just thinks I'm weird. Hours on the road does that, you become lost in a rabbit-hole of your own thoughts. The first person you speak must wonder which planet you're from.

Speaking with her made me think back to a few hours earlier when I was in the van and the ordinary mood it put me in. I've just gone through hell and back on the bike to get here, it's practically frozen over and I've still got an hour and a half ahead of me. But I feel pretty good in comparison, and it provides the spark I need to make it home.

The next morning at work I asked Nigel, "How was your drive home?"

"Absolutely shithouse," he said.

- Ryan Grubb

Metzeler does a 360

Is this the dirt bike tyre to do it all?
We check out Metzeler's new MC360...



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TODD REED

★ REPORT BY TODD REED

Continued >



Your dirt bike's tyres are round, black and knobby... but they aren't all created equal. The right tyres give you the confidence to push hard, the wrong ones can leave you on your ear.

Choosing new rubber can be hard – each brand offers a myriad of choices in compounds, intended uses and sizes. Metzeler is trying to do something about this hassle for dirt bike riders with its new MC360, an enduro/MX/SX tyre which is also street legal. About the only choice you might need to make is either the mid-soft or mid-hard versions.

The MC360 name covers two new tyre designs which come in a range of different sizes. Mid-Hard and Mid-Soft are the two different terrain options available, with 18 and 19 inch rear options, as well as 21-inch fronts. The tread pattern designs are quite aggressive, and

are clearly aimed the enduro and motocross markets rather than trail or adventure.

Tyre Tech

Technically speaking, the Metzeler MC360 tyres are very advanced with a number of key features which make them stand out from the crowd.

The Mid-Soft terrain tyres feature a “parabola” layout: the knobs aren't a ‘straight’ cut, instead featuring a curve in each side of the knob to allow increased bite on both acceleration and deceleration. The knobs are then divided into sections of two and three across the width, alternating around the tyre. This improves the overall strength of the tyre allowing less flex and roll.



The Mid-Hard option begins with a different rubber compound more specific to harder terrain, then continues by offering a different tread pattern with the knobs being larger and wider, yet still offering a quite aggressive design. Continuous Knob Binding Technology is used in the tread and carcass design to improve braking grip and consistency. Like the Mid-Soft, the knobs are divided up into two and three sections across the width of the tyre for similar strength and flex characteristics.

Both the Mid-Soft and Mid-Hard tyres are fully reversible, allowing riders to stretch even more life out of each tyre.

Finally, in what may be the one of the most interesting moves by Metzeler, all of the tyres in the MC360 range are street legal. That's not to say that Metzeler are “recommending” these as a true road tyre option, but for anyone out there with a registered bike it's comforting to know that you can roll out of your garage, down the street and into the bush without a worry about your tyre choice.

Continued >





Being street legal is also important if a bike is being ridden by a customer or staff member - a business could be held liable if it put off-road only tyres on a bike and someone rode it on the road, so don't be surprised if the MC360 becomes the tyre of choice for bike hire and tour companies, and on properties.

Ride Time

Getting down to business and hitting the dirt is really the part we all want to know about. Beginning with the enduro bikes, we rode a KTM 300 EXC, Suzuki DR-Z400 and Honda CRF250L through a variety of conditions with both tyres and came away quite impressed. The Mid-Soft option offered a bit more bite that was evident with competition-based KTM, but

on the DR-Z and CRF the difference wasn't nearly as noticeable where the Mid-Hard option could prove to be a much better value for money option on the dual-sport models. Handling rocks and logs was easy, with good all-round grip and predictability from both tyres.

On the motocross track, our mixture of bikes included a 2017 Yamaha YZ450F, Honda CRF450R and Kawasaki KX450F. The Mt Kembla MX track is a relatively hard-packed circuit with a lot of elevation changes and a quite grippy surface. Across the board both tyres hooked up well, with a very predictable feel. The mid-soft tyre again had more of a bite when it came to traction as opposed to the mid hard, however the mid soft had a tendency to break loose in the more hard pack sections of

Continued >



the track. When leaning through turns both tyres held up well without rolling or washing out, with a very predictable feel which is key to having confidence in both your bike and tyres.

Pricing

With a myriad of sizes and two compounds, we can't say exactly how much a pair of MC360s will cost you, but what we do know is the new Metzeler will be very competitive - most riders will be up for around \$200 a pair, but it will be a little cheaper for some.

Verdict

Metzeler tyres are popular with many older dirt bike riders, those who got to know the brand when it was really strong in Australia - many younger blokes don't have any experience with Metzeler at all.

Indeed, *Cycle Torque's* Ray Macarthur bought a set of MC5s, one of the older designs, just a few weeks before the MC360 was announced - we're looking to try the new rubber as soon as we get the chance to do a comparison.

One thing we do know is the versatility of the MC360 - Enduro and MX while still being street legal and reversible - is exceptional.

After a solid days riding the new Metzeler MC360s they proved to be a very capable tyre, offering great all-round grip and durability. For the rider out there who is riding a bit of everything, and might find themselves on a MX track on Sunday, but out riding in the bush the following weekend the MC360s offer a perfect mix of versatility. ■



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The World Game

The G 310 R is BMW's first foray into small-capacity motorcycling. A machine built in India and set to take the global market by storm...



★ STORY BY RYAN GRUBB, PHOTOS BMW MOTORRAD

RYAN WEARS AIROH HELMET, MOTODRY JACKET/BERIK LEATHERS, DRAGGIN JEANS, FIVE GLOVES, FALCO SNEAKERS/XPD BOOTS



BMW Motorrad is chasing the younger rider. The new G 310 R is a major departure from its current model range, almost entirely 800cc-plus. The company wants to ‘Make Life a Ride’ but its current customer, typically an older male, is over the hill.

It's not a bad problem to have because they're the ones with the most money, but it has become a problem since LAMS regulations have been in place. Anyone with a lean towards Bavaria's finest has had to ride something else first.

Sure there was the 650 GS, which was a learner-approved adventure machine, but it wasn't really aimed at younger riders buying their first bike, and

it's been discontinued for a while now anyway.

The problem BMW has identified is when you're left to buy something else means you'll become more likely to stick with that brand – even when you get to an age when you can afford that dream BMW.

It's one reason why the Japanese are so successful.

Another reason is Japanese bikes are built to a high standard, and they're not as expensive.

BMW's G 310 R changes all of that, it's an affordable, learner-approved naked, complete with the sass of its S 1000 R sibling, and bundled into a package anyone can enjoy.

BMW G 310 R: Launch

BMW Motorrad Australia invited *Cycle Torque* to the Australian media launch of the G 310 R in tropical climate of Airlie Beach, Queensland.

Throughout the launch I got to learn a lot more about the bike, spending a morning on the road, exploring the sights of the Whitsundays, and the afternoon at a local track giving the G 310 R a thorough pasting, which resulted in plenty of thrills and (luckily) no spills...

BMW G 310 R: Development

The press component of the launch was hosted by Andreas Lundgren, BMW Motorrad Australia's GM and Nigel Harvey, its marketing manager, where I was given an introduction to the bike and who BMW thinks will buy it.

Andreas said the G 310 R is naturally a “very important” bike for the brand, because it enters into a segment BMW hasn't competed before.

He also admitted the G 310 R may not have the best performance in any one area alone, but the combination of its parts is what makes the bike special.

The company isn't making very much money on the bike either, it's competitively priced at \$5,790 plus on-roads.

Nigel played a marketing video which promotes a modern ideology for the brand, one the G 310 R represents.

Nigel made the comment that BMW Motorrad hasn't spoken to this customer before, so its marketing material is different to what we've come to expect from the brand.

He introduced the G 310 R as an “economical entry into the BMW range.”

He also said the bike has been built for a global market, so it's gone through an extensive testing process, making sure the one-size-fits-all approach works.

BMW Motorrad has been developing the G 310 R with the Indian-based production plant, TVS, since April 2013.

The bike was initially meant to arrive late last year, but BMW quality controllers weren't completely satisfied, so it was pushed back six months to ensure an excellent product goes to market.

BMW G 310 R: The Bike

As we are walked-through the ins and outs of the bike, the standout feature is firstly the evocative style, but there are a few things besides that which captivate my attention.

The cylinder head is reversed, so the exhaust header

Continued >



comes out of the back of the engine. This means the air intake faces forward and allows easier access to the mixture.

This engine design isn't completely about performance, it's to promote better handling as well. The 180-degree head also allows the engine to be tilted backwards, meaning it can be placed further forward in the frame, which therefore places more weight over the front wheel, ergo better handling.

The by-product of this engineering also meant BMW could lengthen the swingarm to create more stability too.

BMW Motorrad claims the G 310 R has the best fuel economy in the category, at 3.3L/100km.

It also claims performance figures of 34 horsepower at 9,500 and 28 Newton-metres of torque at 7,500

revs, which is respectable for a 313cc single-cylinder engine aimed at younger learners and returning riders.

Its looks are appealing partly due to its grown-up naked styling, and it looks like a bigger bike. Ample tyre sizing is a factor here, along with that longer swingarm and a sharp steering angle. It's a teenage S 1000 R.

The running gear looks the business - 40mm gold upside down forks and a 45-degree progressively wound rear shock (preload adjustable), both by Kayaba, are impressive units upon close inspection. So is the radially-mounted four-piston front caliper, from Bybre. There's two-channel ABS and a large, 300mm front rotor.

I flick the ignition on to check out the instruments and the information is well laid out: a gear position



indicator and a fuel range readout are welcome inclusions.

BMW offers the G 310 R in three colour options: Strato Blue Metallic; Cosmic Black and Pearl White Metallic.

While it certainly works in the flesh, the overall build quality is good, but not at the same level as the German-built Beemers. That's not a huge issue in my book, the price point means that would be unachievable. My concern at this stage is whether the bike works on a larger level, like Lundgren said. Will the sharper steering geometry truly work with front end weight bias, or will it make the bike feel bit too twitchy for learners at low speeds?

BMW G 310 R: Cityscape

Time to ride. I throw a leg over the bike and put my hands on the 'bars. I'm surprised. Being a taller (and heavier) guy the static seating position and rear spring feels remarkably satisfying. I take a look around and it seems to fit most shapes and sizes in the mostly male convoy too. I can see

Continued >





plenty out of the rear-view mirrors which is another tick of approval.

As we ride out of town my initial concern with the front end is abating. It steers really well. I start to wonder how it will handle higher speeds. The track session later in the afternoon will be a good opportunity to test it out...

In slow speed riding conditions I think it may take a learner rider (with no experience) a day or two to build their confidence with the quicker steering, but that time in the saddle focussing on technique will pay off tenfold. The reward is extremely good handling and it's noticed when you flick it from side to side, like when you go around roundabouts. However I concede it may not be to all learners' tastes.

Build your skills on the G 310 R and I think it has

the potential to turn a learner rider into a formidable motorcyclist, passing the practical part of the P-plate test with flying colours. To me it feels like it's been made for carving up the hustle and bustle and it wouldn't be out of place in the twisties either.

BMW G 310 R: Open Road

Leaving Airlie Beach provides a great opportunity to test out the gearbox, as the speed limits increase, it feels okay and it will get better with a few more kilometres under its belt. I was really happy with the suspension in suburbia, and I'm still content with how it performs under more duress. The rear could do with a bit more preload to account for my weight, but the roads up here are quite good. There's no burning desire to adjust it. The front forks are firmer than expected but they're compliant. Only mid-



corner bumps upset it slightly. I can't see that it will trouble many learner riders.

BMW G 310 R: Engine

Being built for a world-wide market means BMW has compromised the bike's capacity from a Western perspective. It has decided to go with a machine under 650cc in capacity to cater for the Asian, Indian (and European to a lesser extent) markets, while still being relevant to Australian riders bound by LAMS regulations.

The 313cc single-cylinder engine spins up quickly and the power it produces throughout the low to mid-range was one of the bike's strengths.

Feed it gears and the Beemer's usable torque will continue to reward you by getting in front of traffic, where you'll stay 'till the highway.

A lack of outright horsepower means the bike is down on top speed, giving it a tendency to sign off early soon after peak torque has been reached, but it's still good to 140km/h plus – well over any learner's speed limit.

Although it was capable, I felt a bit sadistic whipping the G 310 R into submission and vibrations through

the 'bars, seat and pegs were a good indication the engine was starting to complain.

That's not the point of it though. I watched-on in awe as a former world superbike rider fried up a few doughnuts and power-slid the bike over some of the Whitsunday's most beautiful sand. That's what this bike enables you to do: hang with others, get away from the norm and have lots of fun.

BMW G 310 R: Track session

Taking BMW's newest learner bike outside of its comfort zone for the afternoon didn't completely add up to me, but I'll admit just how wrong I was...

Marketing material shows young people in suburbia: laughing, skating, shooting the breeze and enjoying each other's company as its target market.

Bike journos definitely aren't in that target market so riding the bike to a skatepark to spend the afternoon doing kickflips, acid drops and other exercises of a long-haired yahoo would have been more suitable for marketing the bike, but it would have been a pointless (but hilarious) exercise for grown men and women.

However we all enjoy the social side of the equation

Continued >



the G 310 R offers, so we've all got plenty in common with said yahoos. It's just that we get our kicks at the track. I think anyone can relate to that.

BMW decided to send us to a motard track in Proserpine to spend the afternoon. I questioned its choice because it leaves the the potential to put off the intended audience, who may overlook leather-clad power rangers in knee-down track images as simply more mainstream motorcycling nonsense...

However the afternoon did achieve something very valuable besides testing out the new G 310 R... Fun and camaraderie. Fun is one of those universal languages, you're either having it or you're not. And we were having LOTS of it, together.

At the end of the day, I think BMW made the right move. The group of journalists at the launch would have conceivably ridden every motorcycle ever produced in the last 30 years. If we can all enjoy ourselves immensely at the track on a small-capacity learner bike, I've got no doubt anyone can, wherever it may be.

Slicing and dicing

A few things made the afternoon so enjoyable. One is that we were riding the same bike and the other is that the track was short, tight and technical.

BMW Marketing Manager Nigel Harvey set the agenda for the first session. Take it easy for a couple of laps, and keep it in third gear. When it came time to up the pace, I kept it in third gear except for the straight where I briefly changed to fourth.

The exercise really showed off the capability of the engine and handling. The speeds are comparable to public roads and the G 310 R was in its tractable 3,500-7,500 rev range. The chassis makes for agile riding as it's being confidently leant over to places where most learners' dream.

I've got absolutely no qualms about recommending this bike in terms of how it handles to younger learners or older returners alike. I still haven't given the Bybre brakes a good squeeze, so I still need to find out how well it stops and I'll get to that

Continued >

SPECIFICATIONS:

2017 BMW G 310 R

- ENGINE: Liquid-cooled single-cylinder engine, 180-degree head, dual overhead cams
- CAPACITY: 313cc
- TRANSMISSION: Six-speed
- DRIVE TYPE: Chain drive
- FUEL CAPACITY: 11L
- FRAME TYPE: Tubular space frame
- SEAT HEIGHT: 785mm
- WEIGHT: 158.5kg Wet
- FRONT SUSPENSION: 40mm Kayaba upside-down forks (non-adjustable)
- REAR SUSPENSION: Kayaba rear shock with adjustable preload
- BRAKES: single 300mm disc with Bybre four-piston radial-mount caliper.
- TYRES: 110/70-17, 150/60-17
- PRICE: \$5,790 plus on-roads

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harrowingly exciting moment shortly.

As soon as I feel like I've got the track layout sorted, I come in for a quick breather. Nigel Harvey from BMW comes in soon after, I'd been watching him mix it up with a few others and it looked like he was having the time of his life.

Initially I found overtaking was quite difficult, but as I watched Nigel and a few other more experienced riders circulate, I noticed they kind of 'forced' their way through the pack.

As I was one of the less experienced track riders, my strategy was to err on the side of caution with passing opportunities and it made for an epic moment, especially with Chris Pickett, the previous editor of Cycle Torque, who was there working for another publication.

Move out of my way or lose a limb!

"You head out and I'll follow," Picko said. "I'll critique you..."

"You can't critique a speck in the distance mate, I'll be long gone!" I quipped, knowing full well a rider of his ilk could carve me up in a matter of moments.

So I took off from pitlane like I'd been shot from a cannon. Those who are familiar with Picko will know he has a turn of phrase for just about every situation. I could only imagine what he would be thinking... Something like 'move out of my way or lose a limb' came to mind!

That moment...

I put in four or five of my best laps without being overtaken, full of confidence, and I was beginning to arrive upon the rider in front.

The hunted became the hunter. I had to overtake them as soon as I could to ensure my survival from an afternoon of Pickett's sledging.

My biggest fear wasn't crashing (yet), it was not gaining some bragging status with a good friend, mentor and comrade. I'd never hear the end of it!

Knowing that I don't have much experience with passing manoeuvres, there was also lots of trepidation: the tight circuit leaves very little opportunity to get it wrong.

As we come up to a section of track I'm most comfortable with – a fast right-hander leads into a hairpin left, followed by a short straight and a

Continued >



succession of medium-paced rights.

My plan was to carry as much corner speed out of the fast turn as I could, keeping it tight so my momentum would help me get the most of the outside line of the hairpin left. This would set me up me with the inside line for the series of lefts where my grand plan would eventually culminate. Easy peasy, I thought...

If only.

All was going to schedule as I got on the gas early out of the fast right to keep as much speed as possible, then the rider in front brakes much earlier than I expect. My plans go out the window, I need a drawing board, fast!

I'm currently on the outside with no conceivable way around the corner, or the rider. Throttle pinned, I've got nowhere to go... My options are to possibly run off the track; or administer an exam which would make a butt doctor blush, all within the matter of a second...

I end up taking a third option, which is to turn towards the inside and slam on the brakes to make my way around the corner. This should give the rider

in front a glimpse of my front wheel, making them hold a wide line which will let me through.

I brake. As hard as I can. The ABS unit momentarily engages, I can feel the brake pads tickling the rotor to prevent the front wheel from completely locking up.

I'm not out of the woods yet. I still need to slow the bike down, and in this instance I need to change to second gear to provide some engine braking and tip the bike on its side as quickly as possible. I can't turn too early, nor can I turn too late. Doing this, and only this, is the only way to avoid catastrophe.

I do as such and the move sticks! I can almost not believe it, I haven't run the corner wide or lost any momentum. Phew.

Proof in the pudding

That hair-raising experience is great data for a learner rider. The exact situation I was in is very similar to ones that happen to riders every day on the road. These moments are enough to make your blood curdle – a car running a red light and/or when a car pulls out from an intersection without

Continued >

right of way. Even worse, when wildlife decides to play chicken. On the road there are a few defensive techniques which can help you avoid these situations from ever happening, but they're not much help once you're actually in those situations.

Braking to the point ABS kicks in, not because you're testing the integrity of the unit, you're relying on it to pull you up, filled me with absolute faith that it will do its best to save you on the road.

Tipping the bike onto its side as quickly as possible and holding its line also let me know that the G 310 R's front end is much more sure-footed than I gave it credit for. It will provide you with the best chance of navigating your way around harm.

The other factor which comes into play is the rider - the fact I was thinking about what I was going to do three corners instead of what was before my eyes thoroughly emulates what can happen on the road, like when you're on the way home and you're thinking about what's for dinner...

Eat my dust!

With a streak of daylight ahead of me I manage to put in another four or five solid laps, then I start making few small mistakes which leads to one much larger in magnitude.

As a 'responsible' bike tester, I'm trying to ride the wheels off this bike, I'm successfully failing and now I'm starting to feel the fatigue from the sheer ecstasy I felt earlier.

I ride past the BMW videographer in a right-hander which gets deceptively tighter, all but fully leaned over, I take my left hand off the bar and start waving to the camera to express the immense joy I'm feeling.

The combination of looking at the camera (instead of looking where I'm going), putting my hand back on the bar whilst getting back on the throttle has put me off line and right in the way of a questionable patch of surface. As I accelerate, I have one of the biggest rear end slides I've ever experienced and feel like I'm about to crash. Again!

Due to a lack of panic, some technique and that longer, stable swingarm, I receive plenty of feedback from the bike and manage to keep it shiny side up, but its a timely reminder to keep it (not to mention the integrity of my skeletal system) in check, and take it easier. By the end of the lap Picko has caught



me, inch by inch, and we come into pit lane together, laughing like a pair of kids after a game of catch me if you can.

"It's not my first rodeo!" chuckles Picko.

I tell him the only reason he got past is because I let him!

We agree to disagree, but the banter and merciless haranguing continues on and off, all the way to Newcastle airport.

"Let's get the trackbike fixed up over the next month and do some trackdays together," he said as we're waiting for our luggage.

I agree.

For me, this story illustrates what the G 310 R is about, the bike has forged some special memories, and it will create new ones too.

Make Ride a Lifetime?

My experience riding BMW's G 310 R has been pretty impressive. On the spec sheet it isn't the best bike in any one area. In typical BMW fashion it is not until you look at the sum of its parts before it all adds up. For BMW's first machine under 650cc, it has done a lot of the important things right. The bike is right up there in the 3-400cc category. It offers a starting point into BMW ownership which used to start at 30 to 40 and brings it down to 17. But I don't think you can jump from this bike straight to an S 1000 R with a full licence. Something like the R nineT, however, would be more suitable.

It's not just that, the experience has enabled me to briefly live out my version of BMW's marketing video for the bike. I've met a few new people, we share a common interest in riding and the memories I've gained will be hard to forget. ■



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One Duck to Rule Them All



The new Ducati SuperSport slips into Ducati's line-up between the Panigale and the Multistrada – but will it be versatile enough and sporty enough?

★ REPORT BY RYAN GRUBB, PHOTOS GREG SMITH/IKAPTURE

RYAN WEARS [ROAD] AIROH HELMET, MOTODRY JACKET, FIVE GLOVES AND FACLO SNEAKERS.
[TRACK] BERIK LEATHER SUIT AND XPD BOOTS.



Before we dive too deep into the details of the new 2017 Ducati SuperSport, there's a few things you need to understand about Ducati...

1. Ducati builds awesome sportsbikes.
2. Sportsbikes are, for the most part, not practical. That is, unless you only ride them on the track.
3. Ducati's SuperSport is being marketed as a practical sportsbike.

Sport, made light?

Ducati calls it "sport, made light" and it doesn't mean light in terms of weight, instead it takes a more Italian interpretation, as in 'easy to consume'.

So it has the sporting good looks of a Panigale, relatively sane performance, relatively sane comfort and great safety features. Heck, Ducati has even released press pics showing it being ridden two-up!

It's here I'll admit it, I've been very keen to ride the new SuperSport, I was tempted to order one on spec when it was announced...

Road Sports?

Ducati calls the segment the SuperSport fits into 'road-sports', which it says fits in between sportsbikes and sports-tourers. That's a bit of Ducati marketing jargon to say this bike is a sports-tourer, but they want to convey the idea it's special. And it is...

The Italian marque has done plenty of market research and identified 70 per cent of sales are expected to be first-time Ducati owners. These people may have dreamed about Ducati sportsbike ownership but they also have their smarts about them. So they'll more than likely be an experienced rider who prefers realistic, manageable performance and they will typically own one bike at a time, so it obviously needs to be versatile.

That sounds like me, no wonder I was frothing at the wallet!

I'm lucky in that I get to ride lots of new bikes so I've always told myself that the next purchase will be made with as much thought as there is emotion, and even though my excitement got the best of me when I first heard about the SuperSport, there are

Continued >



still a few things holding me back.

The big questions I have before pulling the trigger are: performance, ergonomics, suspension, price and competition.

Will 113 thoroughbreds be enough? Will the ride still be a bit too sporty and uncompromising? Will the suspension be too stiff for everyday Australian conditions? How much am I expected to pay for the Italian experience and how much will it cost me in after-sales and service? And then there's competition. Ducati is comparing the SuperSport to things like KTM's 1290 Super Duke GT, Kawasaki's Ninja 1000, BMW's R 1200 RS and Honda VFRs which are all more touring focussed. For me I think it competes pretty stiffly with things like Triumph's new Street Triple RS, and to a lesser extent Kawasaki's Z900, Yamaha's MT-09 – all have similar output and aren't as oriented towards the touring side of things. It's fierce competition, so will the SuperSport be a better bike?

Lots of food for thought.

The engine

Ducati has opted for the 937cc Testastretta 11-degree which was first seen on last year's Hypermotard 939 and on paper it has similar performance. The SuperSport has a broader power band, reaching maximum torque of nearly 97 Newtons earlier than the Hyper at 6,500rpm. Ducati claims 80 per cent of torque is available from 3,000rpm, and 90 per cent above three grand to 113hp peak power at 9,000 revs. 53mm throttle bodies are opened by ride-by-wire.

Ducati Safety Pack

This has been around for a few years now - it's basically Ducati's ABS and traction control system. The SuperSport is controlled by Bosch's 9MP ABS system and Ducati's traction control which has three and eight levels of adjustability respectively.

The Bosch ABS system is designed to prevent wheel lock in a whoopsie; and rear wheel lift in a really big whoopsie, it therefore shortens braking



distances and enhances stability. The three-level adjustment allows for increasing levels of intervention.

Level 1 - ABS acts on the front wheel only and disengages rear wheel anti-lift. It basically means you're on your own.

It's not a default setting in any Riding Mode but you can associate it with one through the menu.

Level 2 - ABS acts on the rear wheel and anti-lift is engaged. It's the minimum intervention level.

Level 3 engages maximum braking and rear wheel lift intervention.

The Bosch ABS system can also be switched off in any Riding Mode and stays off until the next time you turn the bike on.

Riding Modes

There are three Riding Modes: Sport, Touring and Urban.

Each mode provides a different engine map and Safety Pack settings.

Sport and Touring use full power with a different throttle response according to the mode.

Urban mode is designed for poor or wet road surfaces with engine power limited to 75hp and a progressive throttle response.

Each mode can be tailored to your preference.

Factory settings can be also be restored by setting the 'default' option in the menu.

Standard vs S-model

Ducati Australia's spokesperson at the launch was most uncomfortable describing the SuperSport as a 'standard' model, because it's his job to say all Ducatis are special, but that's just how it will be known to the public, so that's what I'll call it to make it easier to understand. The S-model, however, that is special...

There are a few subtle differences between the standard SuperSport and SuperSport S models, namely DQS (a Ducati up/down quickshifter), Öhlins suspension at each end, a seat cowl and

Continued >



two colour options are standard inclusions for the SuperSport S.

The S model’s forks are thicker than the Marzocchi’s featured standard (43mm vs 48mm).

Both DQS and the seat cowl are available for the standard model as an accessory.

Prices and after-sales

The Ducati SuperSport is available in Ducati Red for \$17,990 RRP.

The Ducati SuperSport S is available in Ducati Red for \$2,000 extra, at \$19,990 RRP, and Star White Silk for \$20,290 RRP.

Valves are checked every 30,000km and general service is annually or every 15,000km.

A Ducati salesman said service costs are roughly \$500 per year for a rider who travels 7,000km each year, which equates to a general service each year and a valve check every four years.

A ride impression (Touring Mode)

By the time I slow-speed steered out of Ducati HQ

in suburban Sydney, hit the crack in the pavement and accelerated out onto the street my first impression was Ducati has got a lot of things right.

The riding position for one – it is spot on – comfy and slightly forward.

The ‘pegs are located underneath the seat.

The seat itself is comfortable and you sit ‘in’ the bike.

The off-set clip-ons raise the ‘bars to keep you upright, the bend in my elbows feels close to 90 degrees. There is no weight on my wrists.

Rider input throughout slow handling manoeuvres feels effortless.

The SuperSport is very confidence-inspiring in traffic.

Taking a look around the convoy, there are guys from 5’6” all the way up to the 6’4” plus behemoths like myself and one other (who’s even taller), and everyone looks comfortable.

The suspension is quality, and to Ducati’s credit it’s plush and compliant.

Hitting the bumps and travelling over poor surfaces

SPECIFICATIONS:

2017 DUCATI SUPERSPORT AND SUPERSPORT S

- ENGINE: Liquid-cooled L-twin, four valves per cylinder
- CAPACITY: 937cc
- TRANSMISSION: Six-speed
- DRIVE TYPE: Chain drive
- FUEL CAPACITY: 16L
- FRAME TYPE: Tubular steel trellis
- SEAT HEIGHT: 810mm
- WEIGHT: 210kg Wet
- FRONT SUSPENSION: Fully-adjustable 43mm Marzocchi upside down forks. [S] Fully-adjustable 48mm Öhlins upside down forks
- REAR SUSPENSION: Fully-adjustable Sachs monoshock (progressive linkage). [S] Fully-adjustable Öhlins TTX monoshock (progressive linkage)
- BRAKES: F: 2 x 320mm discs with radial-mounted Brembo monobloc four-piston callipers, radial mounted, radial pump master cylinder, ABS. R: 245mm disc with Brembo two-piston caliper, ABS
- TYRES: Pirelli Diablo Rosso Ills: 120/70-17, 180/55-17
- PRICE: from \$17,990 plus on-roads

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throughout Sydney and on the twisty Old Pacific Highway (The Old Road), bumps feel practically non-existent. I search for the worst bumps I can find to upset the bike. I fail.

After a bit over an hour's riding we stop at Pie in the Sky to regroup, the bike is getting a bit hot under the seat.

At this point I think Ducati deserves the highest praise for making the SuperSport a practical, everyday bike.

The Old Road impression (Sports Mode)

The engine is an absolute peach. Torque is king on the road, Ducati's dyno claims feel about right.

The SuperSport isn't rocketing out of corners, but it's certainly got plenty of punch.

The gearbox is slick and positive, clutch-less up-changes feel nice though it requires a firm action. Using a lighter touch I found a false-neutral clicking into sixth once or twice.

The steering geometries feel spot on too, it doesn't feel like it's 'on rails', but I've got plenty of

confidence in the front-end and the Pirelli Diablo Rosso III tyres.

Brakes are on point, the Brembo M4s provide plenty of bite.

This is a genuine sports-tourer in my book.

Private testing

We stop for lunch at a private circuit where we are read the 'riot act' by its owner, who is a fair character, though one I wouldn't want to mess with.

Ducati staff told us we would get two sessions of three laps, but we ended up getting three.

At least half of the group hadn't previously ridden at this facility, so more of our energy was going to be spent learning the right way 'round five kilometres or so of 29 corners.

They wanted us to get the best experience of the bike, which we did, but they were probably a bit guilty of putting a bit too much on the agenda for one day.

The first session was on the SuperSport and like I



said, it was mostly spent learning my way around. This private circuit is like Mecca for winding country-roads. There's no kerb and gutter or run-off areas, so you really have to treat it like a winding country road. Honestly, it was a perfect way to test the SuperSport in its intended environment. It steers effortlessly, changes direction on a knife's edge, gets itself beyond 200km/h quickly and it stops well, although I was braking pretty conservatively compared to those with racing experience.

I got caught out going a bit too slow in a few spots and a bit too fast in others. The Bosch ABS system helped me out on one occasion where I had to scrub off speed at lean.

When my session was over I slugged on a bottle of water to stay hydrated and took five minutes to go over the areas I was struggling with on the circuit map.

SuperSport S

The next session was on the SuperSport S with the Öhlins suspension and DQS up/down quickshifter.

My confidence grew in the space of 500m. By Turn 3 I push the front end slightly on the brakes, knee down, hard on the gas towards the Turn 4 hairpin, brake late, downshift one gear, no clutch, auto-blip, the rear end starts feel 'vague', tip in, the front end pushes again, knee on the deck and throttle to the stop on corner exit.

Holy shit, I feel like Casey Stoner!

My senses prevail and I keep my ego in check for rest of the session, though I push much faster, and only one section of track is troubling me.

I try to put my finger on it after the session ends. I was a bit ecstatic after having so much fun, all I managed to mutter was 'it steers better'...

I think the difference between the suspension may have made the S handle that bit better all round. The suspension settings felt pretty similar between both bikes so it's too hard to say definitively. My confidence level is the biggest difference, that and the fact DQS makes it so much easier to ride fast.

I should have jumped back on the SuperSport for third session to confirm my suspicions but the way

Continued >



I was going, I didn't want to bin it finding out, and I couldn't not use DQS...

Throttle to the stop 'till the revs hit nine grand, change up whilst pinned, dive on the chocks, tap it down and the system blips the throttle, matching the engine and gearbox's speeds. Wow!

I decide to spend the third session at what you'd call 'fast scratching' speed and this is where I had the most fun.

This has answered all of my questions and it's what I'd buy a SuperSport S for.

We'd ridden the crap roads to get here, the bike was hard to fault in performance and comfort. Now we're on the good stuff and it's time to enjoy ourselves.

For me what showed off how well the SuperSport is set up is no-one made any changes to the suspension.

Yes it was a bit too soft at either end on the circuit and it could have done with some preload adjustment but for road conditions – where this bike will be ridden – it was hard to fault.

Some more observations

One thing I did notice at the circuit was I kept scraping my boots at lean, mainly due being ever-so cramped under sports riding conditions. I reckon I'd opt for the taller seat to increase the distance, look to lower the pegs 15-25mm or remove the

pillion pegs as a last resort.

The other thing I noticed on the SuperSport S was the quickshifter refused to go down once or twice from high speeds. It engaged and blipped from sixth to fifth, but it refused to go from fifth to fourth, eventually conceding after two or three tries and a bit of panic trying to get the bike stopped in time.

I rode back to Ducati HQ on the SuperSport through heavy traffic and the clutch started to feel heavy by the end of the ride. Maybe Ducati could look at running lighter springs.

That good, you reckon?

I disclosed my bias early in the article because I liked the look of what I saw on paper so much, but I'm a smart man and smart men have reservations.

Well Ducati's SuperSport has unequivocally exceeded my expectations. You can commute on this bike, you can tour on it, you can scratch and carve canyons and it won't feel out of place on a track day. If you've always wanted an Italian woman in your life, but you're too smart to ride a Panigale, too young to ride a Multistrada, not cool enough to ride a Scrambler and not enough of a bastard to ride an XDiavel, buy a SuperSport.

If you could own any Ducati and only ride one this is it.

If you owned them all I reckon you'd ride this the most. ■



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★ REPORT BY NIGEL PATERSON, PHOTOS JEFF CROW

NIGEL WEARS SHOEI HELMET, SPIDI JACKET, FIVE GLOVES, IXON PANTS
AND ALPINESTARS BOOTS

Mountain Motor Bike

Is Royal Enfield's Himalayan the best thing to happen to Adventure bikes in decades, or just the ugliest bike available today?





Have you ever missed the view? You're so focused on the riding you completely miss the scenery?

I have, many times - arriving first, basking in the self-centered glory of winning a race no-one else on the ride realised was a race only to have them regale stories of the rock formations, eagles or raging white-water creeks, all of which I missed because I was more concerned with gear selection, redline and braking points.

Sometimes, slower is better.

I really discovered this on a couple of tours. When I did Cape York last century my dirt bike skills were, let's say, sadly lacking. I crashed my brains out on

the first day and spent the next seven concentrating so hard on not dying that I saw nothing but the track in front of me if the engine was running.

Years later I toured Vietnam with Vietnam Motorcycle Tours on sub-200cc cruisers and had a ball - outside of the cities the riding was a doddle, little concentration required.

I saw so much...

I'm telling this story because it's how the Royal Enfield Himalayan makes me ride. A bit slower, a bit more touristy and a bit less full-on action.

Don't get me wrong, I love big, powerful Adventure

bikes - I've even owned a few. They are incredible machines... but the Himalayan isn't a big, powerful adventure bike...

It's for the slower tour, the rider looking for an adventure, not an adrenalin-filled, tyre-tearing, mono-pulling extreme-sport style adventure, but one in which they can sit around the fire and say, "How awesome was that!"

Retro Style...

Unless you have a penchant for '70s-inspired Scramblers crossed with '50s-inspired British singles I struggle to see how you could love the appearance and style of the Himalayan. It's got to be in the

running for ugliest motorcycle currently available today. While there are hints of 1990's BMW R100GS styling in the crash bars running up to become headlight mounts, the industrial design is brutish and functional.

Seriously not pretty, even among adventure bikes, which are never particularly attractive.

When you get past the appearance you'll notice there's a motorcycle like no other underneath. Whether that's a good thing depends a lot on what you want in a motorcycle - there's certainly no traction control, ABS, riding modes, cruise control, Bluetooth, heated handgrips... but I think there's a coffee percolator in there somewhere!

The guys at Urban Moto, the Australian importers, tell me lots of Royal Enfields are being sold to Uni students in Melbourne, many of them foreign students... Indians of course. People who have experience with the brand, young men (well, mainly men) who grew up with Mum & Dad getting around on a Royal Enfield, so they buy them because they are cheap, easily maintained with a basic toolkit and reliable once you understand a few foibles.

Once upon a time all bikes had foibles, they were included in the build. You learned about them and got by - I carried spare Moto Guzzi throttle cables on my Le Mans...

New design everywhere

The reality is the Himalayan is not a parts-bin special. The chassis was designed by the Harris Brothers, the British Company which has experience in all sorts of custom and bespoke frames, including 500cc Grand Prix machinery. Royal Enfield liked the company so much, they bought it...

Harris came up with a half-duplex split cradle design, a modern interpretation of the traditional British Bike Frame, albeit with a monoshock - the first we've seen on a Royal Enfield.

The engine's also a new design, complete with a counterbalancer to reduce the thump of a single-cylinder engine. Dubbed the LS410 (Long Stroke), it's a sweet motor, but more on that later.

The new engine has enabled Royal Enfield to simplify its building processes in a modern production line, reducing costs and improving quality - Royal Enfield claim this engine

Continued >



will last a long time because it's understressed. Cooling is air/oil - in addition to the engine finning there's oil jets firing black stuff around the inside of the motor and a separate oil cooler mounted on the frame's main downtube.

A traditional package...

Turn on the fuel, pull out the clutch, tickle the carburettor... OK, I'm pulling your leg there, you don't need to tickle the carburettor - but the Himalayan does have a fuel tap, a manual clutch and a carburettor. If there were a kickstarter it'd be really old school... but no, there's a button which proved totally reliable in the two days I had the bike for.

Do customers want carbs, fuel taps and manual chokes? I don't, but I can see the attraction for some, either those who understand how to maintain and troubleshoot these things (including myself, to an extent) or those who want to learn. Certainly if something goes wrong in the back of nowhere, you're more likely to find a farmer who can clean

out a carb than prime a fuel injection system, but I'm inclined to think a modern injection system will be less likely to go wrong... the importer mentioned something about Royal Enfield choosing a carburettor so problems with bad fuel in the Himalayas could be easily drained and replaced, but I was thinking how carburettor jetting is thrown out of whack by high altitudes (regardless of fuel quality), so there's pros and cons to everything.

But don't be surprised if a future upgrade to the bike is EFI...

Once running, the mill required a few minutes to warm-up on the cold June morning of the launch. Then it was simply snick the five-speed 'box into first and head out into the Melbourne traffic...

I quickly discovered the Himalayan would make a nice commuter bike. You sit up relatively high, which gives a great view. The long-travel suspension and trail-style wheels means jumping kerbs is easy, there's a sidestand and centrestand for easy parking and there's a rack on the back standard for some

Continued >

SPECIFICATIONS:

- MANUFACTURER: Royal Enfield
- MODEL: Himalayan
- YEAR: 2017
- ENGINE: Single-cylinder four-stroke, single-overhead cam
- TRANSMISSION: Five-speed
- DRIVE TYPE: Chain drive
- FUEL CAPACITY: 15L
- FRAME TYPE: Half-duplex split cradle
- SEAT HEIGHT: 800mm
- WEIGHT: 182kg Wet
- FRONT SUSPENSION: 41mm telescopic forks with 200mm travel
- REAR SUSPENSION: monoshock with linkage and 180mm travel
- BRAKES: Front - 300mm disc with two-piston floating caliper. Rear - 240mm disc with single-piston floating caliper
- PRICE: \$5,990 plus on-road costs

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gear or a small box.

You don't get fancy adjustable alloy levers, Bluetooth in the instruments or ABS. But you do get an LCD compass in the instruments...

The engine

The LS410 motor actually displaces 411cc. I don't know why they didn't call it the LS411. Anyway, it's a nice, tame, flexible motor. With just 24.5 horsepowers and 32 Newtons, you'd have to be coming from a pushbike to think this thing is powerful, but that said, I don't think that's going to matter to the target audience.

If you're looking for a performance machine you'll be looking elsewhere anyway, and the LS410 motor offers a very pleasant ride, predictable acceleration and decent highway cruising. Its top speed will get you a ticket on the freeway rather than arrested. Its comfortable cruising speed is around 100km/h, although I reckon when they're run in they might go a little quicker - ours were very fresh.

The five-speed transmission seems one short by modern standards, but I didn't miss having sixth. A

low-revving top gear is great on a big bike to reduce fuel consumption and smooth out the ride, but it won't help a 411cc, 24hp engine much.

This is easily the best road bike Royal Enfield has ever built, the counterbalancer smoothing out the vibes... not completely, but significantly. I can ride a Himalayan all day without a drama, and I'd even be happy to do so if I added a Sheepy Hollow Sheepskin or Airhawk aftermarket seatpad.

The ride

The Himalayan is an adventure bike with a low seat. Seriously, 800mm is not a high seat, in fact it was too low for me... with 220mm of ground clearance, the distance between the footpegs and seat was too short for my long-term comfort - but then, I'm not exactly short. I'd like a taller, flatter seat - more padding sure, but it would also reduce the distance required to stand up, which would make life easier off-road, although not as good for shorter riders. And Royal Enfield didn't actually design the bike thinking its primary customer would be six-foot tall Caucasian males...



Up front there's a small screen which takes the buffeting breeze off your chest, traditional-looking instruments which are actually quite comprehensive and a smallish fuel tank - 15 litres, laughable really for an adventure bike, but the fuel consumption - around 20km per litre (or 5L/100km) - means a range of up to 300km, which isn't so bad.

At 182kg ready to ride, the Himalayan is very light for an adventure bike, which is probably why the traffic-light acceleration seemed more than acceptable - I could get the bike ahead of the traffic easily. Around town in the 60-90km/h range it is easy to handle and ride, on the highways at 100-120 it is reaching the end of its comfort zone.

Stopping the bike is a disc at each end and while I liked the feel and power of the back brake, the front feels like many 1980s Italian brakes - lacking in feel and power, surprisingly on and off the bitumen.

If you haven't ridden modern bikes with their great stoppers this might not be something you really notice, for the brakes are acceptable, but they aren't nice to use, although maybe they will improve when they've had a chance to bed in.

The first part of our ride took us from Melbourne to

the Great Ocean Road, instead of the twisties we hit the trails. While we enjoyed morning tea Royal Enfield staff dropped tyre pressures and removed the rubber footpeg inserts, exposing the serrated metal off-road footpegs, essential for the muddy conditions we were about to experience.

I wasn't feeling confident on the Himalayan in off-road conditions, it just seemed too tame, too retro, too much of a styling exercise to work off road... but it does, at least to its design brief, which is more 'any road' than 'any trail'.

Standing up on the pegs is certainly part of the design brief, but these aspects weren't designed by an enduro rider - the tank feels too far forward to grip with your knees and there's a frame rail under the seat which my legs pressed against while standing. This is one aspect where the design falls down, but take this in context - if you're an experienced dirt bike rider you'll find lots of things to dislike. The Himalayan is designed for roads and, realistically, four-wheel-drive tracks. It's not the sort of bike many owners will spend their time standing on their footpegs, but yes, I still heartily recommend you do so in any sort of tricky off-road conditions.

Continued >



We crossed a couple of creeks, we kept it on the throttle in the sand, we got cross-rutted on a downhill, we slipped and slid on Victorian clay... and the Himalayans kept on keeping on, eating the miles and taking us from scenic view to scenic view.

Sometimes it's about performance and sometimes it's about the journey.

If you're looking for high performance, look elsewhere. If you're looking for solid performance, the Himalayan might be for you.

What do I think?

It's quite possible, were we to run a poll, that the Royal Enfield Himalayan would be voted the ugliest bike available today. However, it looks better in the metal and there are certainly many people who love the retro look and would like a retro-styled adventure bike.

And there's others who know you're not really looking at a bike when you're riding it.

And others who will see a lot of Adventure in their future when the machine is priced at just \$5,990 (+on-road costs).

Personally I enjoyed the Himalayan a lot more than I expected, and doing some crazy across Australia or across the Himalayas on a Royal Enfield Himalayan would be an absolute blast. Indeed, if the tour companies around the world using Royal Enfield machines don't update to Himalayans, they've got rocks in their heads...

Royal Enfield has produced a bike which is totally identifiable as their own, yet it offers so much more than anything the company has offered before, and at a price which is pretty amazing.

I've got no doubt people will have amazing adventures on their Himalayans. ■

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Thor's 2018 collection

THOR MX has announced the release of its 2018 racewear collection, featuring completely updated designs to the FUSE, PRIME FIT and PULSE chassis, accompanied by a brand new price-point option in the new SECTOR range. The FUSE racewear line represents the premium of everything that THOR has developed in 50 years of motocross. It is tough, functional and comfortable. The FUSE jersey features a minimal-seam-design for comfort and vented back and underarms, while the FUSE pant offers stretch panels in waistline, pre-curved Rapid Flex knee and 500D Cordura saddle. PRIME FIT has developed a significant

following in the few years since being released; where the racer looking for a more traditional fit and feel will lean toward the FUSE chassis, the fans of PRIME FIT really enjoy the athletic stretch jersey with compression sleeves and lightweight and flexible pants featuring ultra-light thermal welded panels in the knee and rear yoke.

The PULSE line has always been considered the "workhorse" of the THOR racewear offering with premium features like set in style sleeves, four way stretch cuffs and collar, pre-curved shape to the pant with ratchet-style closure and leather knee panels, at an extremely competitive price.

For the big news in the price-point category, THOR presents the new SECTOR racewear collection. The SECTOR line is solid for those riders looking for a clean, traditional style at an incredible price. The jersey is 100% moisture-wicking polyester with raglan sleeves, stretch cuffs and collar and a drop tail. The pant features a pre-curved shape, abrasion resistant materials and mesh liner. Rounding out the 2018 SECTOR offering is the SECTOR glove, which is very lightweight and breathable, featuring a full stretch backhand and lightly padded, perforated palm to keep cool and comfortable. The SECTOR kit maintains traditional racewear styling featuring a black pant, with five interchangeable solid-color jersey options. ■



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Merlin casts its spell over Australia

Check out Merlin, the latest motorcycle clothing manufacture to arrive on Australian shores.

Merlin is a UK leader in retro-styled apparel. Their Yoxall waxed cotton jacket is a great example of what the company is about - authentic styling with the benefits of modern technology and production.

You can't get any more authentic than Scottish waxed cotton, and with a fully-waterproof and breathable membrane, removable thermal liner, zip ventilation and CE armour in the shoulder and elbows, the Yoxall provides a great level of weather and crash protection.

The Hixon leather jacket is another classically-styled leather jacket, made from premium cowhide in a matte finish. There's CE armour in the shoulder and elbows, a back armour pocket ready for your CE back protector, removable thermal liner, YKK zips, multiple pockets and two chest vents.

Both jackets are available in black or brown.

Price Hixon (S-4XL): \$499;

Yoxall (S-3XL): \$449.90

Get them from: selected stockists

More info: [Link International](#)





Just1 range expands

Just1's range of gear has just gotten bigger, with the brand announcing the J12 Carbon fluoro off-road helmet is available in Australia.

It features a full carbon outer shell with a polystyrene inner foam shell. There's two inner and outer shell sizes for the best fit, a wide eye port for goggles, adjustable peak, plenty of air vents and a washable inner-lining. Sizes XS-XXL.

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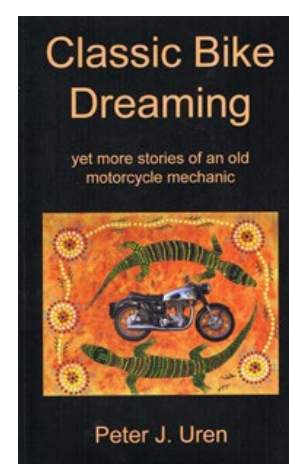
CYCLE TORQUE BOOK SHOP

1. Classic Bike Dreaming

IT'S fourth time lucky for Newcastle author Peter J Uren with his latest tome, Classic Bike Dreaming, yet more stories of an old motorcycle mechanic. It follows in the footsteps of his first three books The Old Mechanic, Dominator in the Shadows and the Classic Bike Workshop. For a new author Peter is certainly making his mark in the publishing world. His latest story follows the plot already developed in the first three books and as each book came out you could see the evolution of Peter's writing style as he sought to further develop his characters and focus more on building them and their inter-relationships.

Be prepared for a bit more of an emotional ride with his latest work as Peter introduces a new, if far more complex character, tangled in a few more social issues. The new character is an Aboriginal of the Kamilaroi mob who is trying to live between two cultures. Peter's knowledge of the issues involved comes from personal connections who have first hand experience and he has captured the essence of the struggles and issues that are confronted. He has woven a rich story not only about his new character but the impact that this newcomer's arrival has on the classic bike workshop we've come to know. Peter joined Stroud Writers in July 2012 and by September the following year he had written and published his first book. He says that this one is likely to be the last in the series.

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



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

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

3. Italian Custom Motorcycles - \$39.99

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

4. And On That Bombshell - \$32.99

I was Top Gear's script editor for 13 years and all 22 series. I basically used to check spelling and think of stupid gags about The Stig. I also got to hang around with Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May. Then I realised that I had quite a few stories to tell from behind the scenes on the show. I remembered whose daft idea it was to get a dog. I recalled the willfully stupid way in which we decorated our horrible office. I had a sudden flashback to the time a Bolivian drug lord threatened to kill us.

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

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

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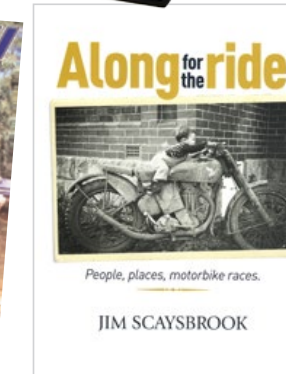
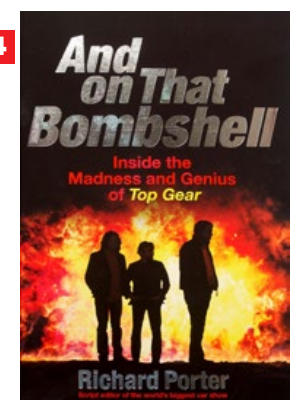
About five years ago Shaun, Andy and I (Jake) started to run out of places to ride. We were sick of riding the same places time and time again so we decided to pay a visit to the Melbourne Map Centre in Chadstone to see if there was a guide book on the subject.

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

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

7. Along for the ride - \$39.95

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



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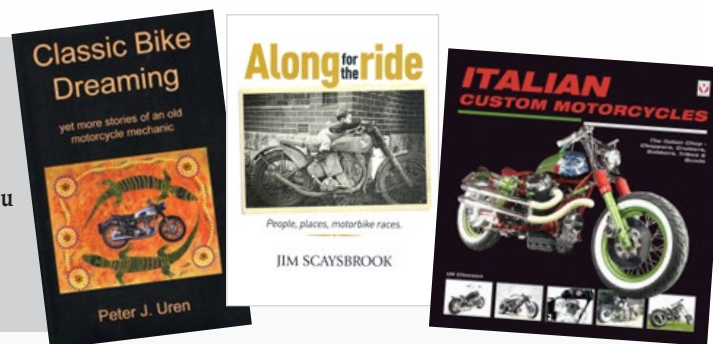
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A conversation...

I received a call from Gil Davidson from Brisbane, who picked up a copy of Cycle Torque May/June and noticed the CFMoto 650NK was a parallel-twin, but the spec sheet had it an inline-four. It's a parallel-twin, my mistake.

As we spoke I thought our conversation would make for a great letter. With Gil's permission, here's what we spoke about:

Gil then spoke to me about the differences between transverse and longitudinal engines and how we might be using the inline term wrong.

We talked about the Sunbeam with its 'inline twin-cylinder' longitudinal engine, which I coincidentally came across browsing the Internet the day before. Gil said he enjoys reading Norman Cotton's articles and finds everybody's responses to him quite funny. He's in his late '70s and still rides a Honda CX with twisted cylinder heads, which was my third lesson for the day.

He's looking for a set of pistons for it, the twisted design means they've become pretty rare – the head of the piston is shaped differently so it can accommodate the intake and exhaust valves being in a different position.

It was such a great chat, most of it well before my time. Lots of people my age would have no idea about most of it.

– Ryan Grubb, Editor

Celebrating all things two-wheels

I've been reading Mr Cotton's words on the pros and cons of the various steeds we choose – and the sometimes mysterious (delusional) reasons we choose them. I think it's a true motorcycling tradition – that of being able to pick apart someone's choice of bike type, brand, colour, attire, etc... but at the end of the day we just enjoy and celebrate all things two-wheeled and those kindred spirits on the road (and off). I once brought my wife a beautiful Triumph (her pride and joy) and I often referred to it as 'the oil stain', although it never let go a drop – it's what we do...

This has caused me to look back at the bikes I've owned, over my more-than-four decades of riding. I started on a postie bike on the farm as a kid, followed by a couple of ag' bikes. These bikes were workhorses, enduro racers, trials bikes, drag bikes, road bikes and even a sports-tourer (once when I ran

away from home, aged 10). Some years later when I got my L's, I bought a red and black Honda VT250. This bike was fast! Then... On it I travelled interstate, attacked dirt, took it down the occasional fire trail and even camping far from any formed road (although it wasn't great on wet grass). It got around Mount Panorama faster than some mates 500cc bikes (the benefit of a misspent youth around Bathurst. Being pulled down Pit Straight behind a police car is a story for another time). We all shared bikes and generally took the piss out of anything that you didn't own. Later in life, having owned bikes various (the choice generally defined by finances), all of which were pressed into service to do most anything. There was little talk of motorcycle category (and none of subcategory or niche bikes). One bike (the one bike you owned at the time) just did it all... Until it didn't. But really, whose limitations are we talking of – that of the bike, or the rider?

As time passed and finances improved, much thought (and more talk) was given to which bike would do the best job at what you thought wanted it to do – it's how we talk ourselves into a full garage. A bike for this, a bike for that – and of course another would be needed for something else & maybe one to do up one day. However, upon reflection, it would seem that what bikes can do may not have changed much – maybe it is me. Could that be true, am I no longer 'fit for purpose?' Am I no longer a boy racer, am I not quite flexible enough to navigate a rough fire trail ... have I become a cruiser or overweight tourer? Surely not (note to self – avoid mirrors)!

But it matters not, I still love getting out on two wheels, love taking the piss out of other bikes and in equal measure enjoy the company of most anyone who chooses two wheels – however they are put together. That is probably the one part that has improved over time, my appreciation of the enjoyment and camaraderie that bikes and bikers (of every denomination) bring into my life. (I'll never own a Harley though!!)

Sam The Pirate.

Hi Sam,
Thanks for your words. It's great seeing the breadth of responses an op/ed can have. I think most people miss the parody in Norman's work you have eloquently picked up on. – RG



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