

BACK TO THE FUTURE

THE CONTINENTAL GT MIGHT BE RETRO IN ENGLAND BUT FOR INDIA'S ENFIELD RIDERS, IT'S PRETTY DARN CUTTING EDGE

WE'LL GET TO THE STYLING LATER: LET'S START with brass tacks. Here are the most pertinent, stand-out facts about Royal Enfield's snazzy new Continental GT which put it in a different league from iterations of the bike which have been sold and ridden in this country for the last half century. The most remarkable is unquestionably the bike's ability to hold speeds up to 120kmph for long periods – there is some vibration to be sure, especially when you get beyond 100kmph, but there's none of that telltale cacophony of the tappets and the fragile feeling that the gaskets might blow with an all-mighty bang at any second isn't there. "It holds together!" blurted a fellow rider in wonder at the bike's Indian launch in Goa last month, carefully inspecting the clutch housing and engine for oil leaks after a two-hour 100kmph plus blitz, and shaking his head in disbelief upon finding none.

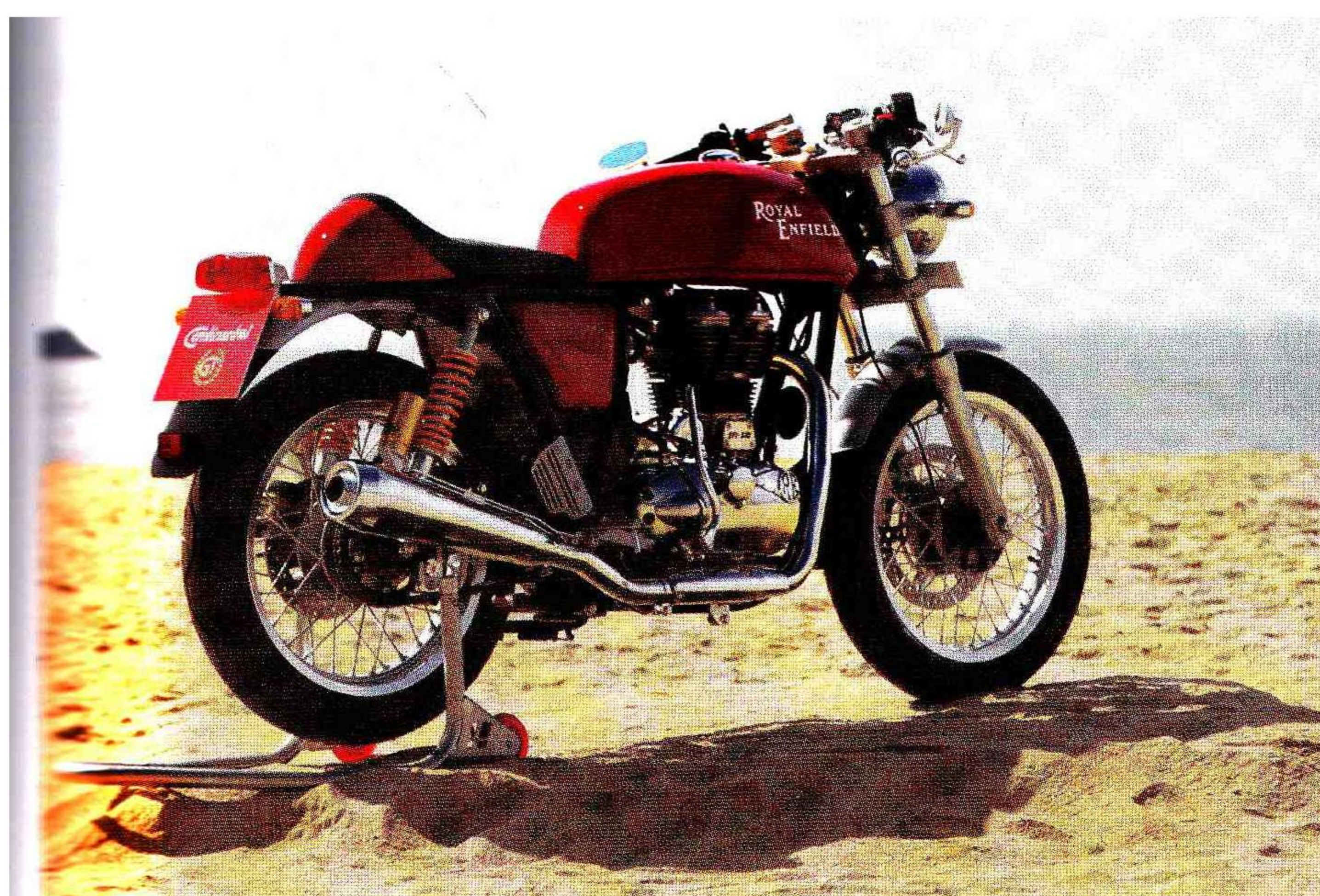
Then there's this fabulous chassis which RE has worked with UK-based Harris Performance to put together. With the older bikes there was a distinct feeling at high speeds that the front and rear of the bike had minds of their own. No such schizophrenia with this twin down-tube cradle frame which sticks to the road as one entity, gets a bit perturbed by bad roads, but compared to its predecessors is an absolute genius at cornering. And assisted by Brembo discs at the front and back, the Continental GT, hold your breath, actually stops on a dime.

A few years back there was an RE advert which said something to the effect of, 'We've stayed different by staying the same.' Well they've changed everything with the Continental GT and yet when you look at the bike, all the things that really matter are



70 | THE MAN | JANUARY 2014

Page No-71, Size of Article-364



EVEN THOUGH YOU CAN PULL THIS BIKE TO 140 KMPH, IT'S CRUISING AT 80-90 KMPH ON TWISTY ROADS WHICH WILL REALLY PUT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE

might there: inspired to the hilt by the model by the same name the company produced in the 1960s, the Continental GT is an elegy to the wonder years of café racing. When naked souped-up machines with low-set handlebars and rear-set foot pegs were the manifestation of the single-minded goal to have fun on a motorcycle. Both the lipstick red and canary yellow paint jobs which the bike is available in accentuate its sporty character, as does the single seat. And what about those after-market sleek bar-end mirrors? This is beyond retro – it's chic to the point that you're going to want to dress to look the part when riding it. The eureka moment on the Continental GT comes when you realise that this is a mid-rev machine – something that veteran RE riders used to grunting about their steeds on low revs will take time to comprehend. Even though you can pull this bike to 140kmph, it's cruising at 80-90kmph on twisty roads which will really put a smile on your face.

Flaws? Sure there are a few: it would have been downright delirious if the Continental GT had another 10-15bhp on tap. And as pretty as it is, the finishing is still not world class. But if RE were to iron these out and plonk in, say a 750cc twin on this bike, then it would cost twice as much. Given the pricing, and positioning, the company deserves a pat

on the back. Not to say for coming out with a product which doesn't make a direct appeal to the masses. They say a man who doesn't know his history is rootless – roots give reference, and a sense of who we are, and in a way where we're headed. RE is all about heritage. And there's no escaping that on the Continental GT.

MERAJ SHAH

ROYAL ENFIELD CONTINENTAL GT

Engine	4-stroke, air-cooled, single cylinder
Displacement	535cc
Power	29.1bhp@5100 rpm
Torque	44NM@4000 rpm
Weight	184 kgs
Price	₹2.05 lakh (ex showroom Delhi)