



Appeal of the Continental

Royal Enfield recreates the classic lines of a magical, bygone era in the refined Continental GT. RISHAD COOPER has the details

First shown at the Indian Auto Expo almost two years ago, and having since wowed crowds at prestigious International motor shows, Royal Enfield's eagerly anticipated café racer, the evocative Continental GT has finally broken cover. It was taken for an extensive, fast-paced test ride in the U.K.

The Continental GT has been painstakingly re-created by Royal Enfield, with a keen eye for detail. Smashing looking, and with standout styling, the GT shows off classic lines of a magical, bygone era. The motorcycle's round headlight is surrounded by an alloy steering brace and clip on handlebars that house Royal Enfield-typical switchgear and rider controls. Royal Enfield will sell aftermarket bar-end mirrors for the GT, and we couldn't recommend these more, for being so functional and solid, despite their tiny size.

The GT comes with an elongated 13.5 litre fuel-tank, tastefully adorned with a neat logo, and equipped with a beautifully sculpted filler-lid. This leads into its single saddle (dual seat available as an option) with smart exposed red stitching and a rounded tail surround. True enthusiasts will admire the GT's exposed frame sections around its flank panels, its dual colour metal mud-

guards, alloy constructed spoke rims, as well as smartly shaped chrome silencer.

High-speed stability

The Continental GT comes with a single-cylinder, air-cooled, 535cc Royal Enfield heart, this beating out a soft, yet evocative and crisp bark that had us blipping the throttle more often. It makes 29.1bhp at 5100rpm of maximum power, 4.49kgm of peak torque at 4000rpm and fuel-injection is standard. The motorcycle comes with a smooth shifting five-speed gearbox, operated in the universal, one-down, four-up pattern, with shift lever on the left of the bike.

The GT feels quick enough for what it is, it holds high speeds over prolonged durations, without much protest. The Continental GT powerplant feels and performs like its siblings, with some improvement

though. It is noticeably more rev happy, with improved top-end performance. On the downside, fuelling needs to be better sorted out, especially towards the bottom end of the powerband, where the GT power delivery feels a touch snatchy and calls for large doses of throttle when dealing with stop and go situations.

The Continental GT is a reasonably comfortable motorcycle to pilot, its saddle feeling supportive, roomy and wide. The footrests aren't placed overly far behind, and the lean down into its clip-on bars isn't so pronounced as to make you uncomfortable.

It's clearly the sportiest riding position of any Royal Enfield bike built today, but still useable over long distances. The GT comes with a double downtube steel frame, perfected by Harris Engineering, and Royal Enfield has tried to pare down weight to a minimum, 184kg, while providing

top class, gas-charged suspension at rear, courtesy Paioli. Ride quality feels firm, especially from the front telescopic forks, while the bike handles with Enfield's trademark stability, going round corners with confidence, and a nice sure-footed feel from its tyres, which are Pirelli front (100/90) and rear (130/70 section) on 18 inch rims.

Powerful brakes

The GT comes with a steel, elliptical section swingarm and single disc units front and rear. Braking feels powerful, with a nice progressive feel at the lever.

Despite riding extensively for the better part of a day, we rarely found the need to feather the rear brake pedal, with ample stopping power available from the front (300mm disc, twin piston) when combined with healthy engine retardation by coming down the gearbox. Royal Enfield has done well to provide a floating front disc rotor, and steel braided brake lines at both ends.

The Continental GT, the best Royal Enfield bike today, should reach Indian showrooms by November 2013. We can expect it to be priced at Rs. 2 lakh - Rs. 2.25 lakh ex-showroom in India.

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