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to thank the guys who thought up campaigns like Think Bike who made drivers more aware of our presence on the road, I've just got to get my girlfriend to perfect that royal wave.
Dave Shaw, email
Ed: Always good to thank considerate drivers!

Bikes need a 'C' mode
 Looks like Yamaha has nearly produced the perfect bike for many (MCN, Yamaha MT-09 test, September 4). But the snatchy throttle action would leave me short-changed which is a shame. When a rider has to toggle between riding modes to get the best out of a bike, and probably failing to do so, something has gone awry. Poor electronics/fuelling applications for EFI has been spoiling our riding for years. It is clearly not improving, and second-guessing our requirements is not helping at all. Michael Neeves got it right - one mode would do. Install a mode if necessary for emissions tests, but ensure there is a 'C' option which stands for: 'Carburettor'. Then we can get back to proper biking control with a smooth throttle doing what we want, plain and simple. Or have I missed something?
Robert Cattle, Ivinghoe

Those were the days... the 1970s
 Liam Marsden says "Arguably the best era for two-strokes was the 1990s" (MCN, Sub-125, September 11). You've got to be joking, mate. Without a doubt the best era ever for two-strokes was the 1970s and early 1980s. The list was endless: RDs... GTs... KHs... X7s... LCs... and when you were 17 you could throw your leg over a 250! I rest my case.
Ube, Nottingham
Ed: Great days indeed, but Marsden was referring to 125s and the glory years of the Aprilia RS.

Riders are the key to success
 I refer to Michael Price's letter 'Bikes win races, not riders' (MCN Letters, September 4). While I would agree the works Hondas have probably been the fastest bikes on the grid since 2010, I don't agree that necessarily guarantees success in motorcycle racing. Handling, power delivery, suspension and braking all play their part in the overall package and Yamaha has

ANDY DOWNES
 The things that irritate me in motorcycling

Economical with the innovation

I recently hired a car through work to get to Heathrow airport and was amazed the boring diesel VW Golf I was using managed (with me driving like my mum) to hit over 60mpg on the return trip. It literally did nothing interesting at any point during the journey, however.

My mum has recently bought a VW Polo with a 1400cc petrol engine, seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox, weighs 1216kg unladen, 140bhp and 185ftlb of torque yet manages to achieve nearly 60mpg thanks to a clever cylinder activation system that shuts down two of the four pots when the motor is unstressed.

Why are motorcyclists being short-changed when it comes not only to innovation but also to economy?

Over a decade ago Honda was developing a Super Blackbird that had similar technology and cut off cylinders when not needed. So where is it? Mothballed in a secret Honda shed somewhere. I bet there are loads of other potentially amazing motorcycle projects gathering dust.

Motorcycles are lighter, have smaller-capacity engines and should be sipping expensive petrol at a much slower rate. Instead, getting more than 40mpg out of anything over 600cc is rare. This hasn't changed in 20 years.

I want to see the magic 100mpg on a motorcycle trip computer without it having to be something slow, sub-250cc and as boring as that Golf.



The best of times: Yamaha LC350 of '80s vintage was good for top side of 110mph

rarely produced the fastest bike, but has been incredibly successful over the years.

Being an avid watcher of all classes of racing, I would also question the suggestion that Marc Marquez would be nowhere on the Tech 3 machine. Tech 3 has consistently put an extremely competitive bike under Cal Crutchlow and he has repaid them with several podiums. The bike is not outpaced by the works Yamahas, and if anyone could win on that bike, it would be Marquez. He is riding the Honda like a veteran, drifting it through the corners like only Casey Stoner could in previous years. The kid is a phenomenon and to put it into perspective, Valentino Rossi won twice in his first year in the MotoGP 500cc class.

Neil Maxfield, email

Leuchars, we have lift off

I'd like to give a big thumbs-up to all the Forces personnel, organisers and police who planned and ran the RAF Leuchars Airshow on September 7. This final airshow at Leuchars was a fantastic event and as usual it was biker-friendly. With around 40,000 people in attendance, traffic management for miles around was a big challenge. Free bike parking on the base and bike-friendly police/quaddies en route made two wheels the perfect way to attend!
John Carmichael, Aberdeen

A Classic mistake

Sorry to be pedantic, but Alan Seeley was wrong in describing the Manx Grand Prix as a de facto Classic TT (MCN, September 4). The Manx Grand Prix was a series of Clubman's

18.09.2013

ANDY CALTON
EDITOR



Let's get ready to rock and roll... all over again!

A picture, so they say, is worth a thousand words.

And a photo of MCN's own, discerning motorcyclist of 107 years Phil West, smiling (it wasn't wind, apparently) while stood behind the new **Royal Enfield Continental GT** has got to be worth a few hundred thousand of the little blighters.

Royal Enfield has been around for 123 years, knocking out almost 200,000 machines for the last couple.

The Indian company, owned by industrial giants Eicher, has quietly gone about its business for many years, winning fans with its robust bikes and down-to-earth styling.

It's not going about its business so quietly any more. The new Continental GT has surprised many - including our own Mr West. The bike is actually pretty good. But it's the style and the price that will tempt many.

Royal Enfield are doing something similar to Norton - but at the other end of the

scale. While Stuart Garner and company at Donington Hall bolt together a fairly small number of bespoke café racer-style parallel-twins for upwards of £13,000, Enfield plans to punt out thousands of these little beauties for close to £5000.

And with style comes substance. Maybe not arm-ripping power, knee-on-the-deck substance. But well thought-out, well-engineered, character-packed substance. And that's where a decent chunk of the market is these days.

A quick trawl of the inter-web shows that **Royal Enfield** has struck a chord with this bike.

It was never going to be on the brink of technical innovation, bedecked with semi-active suspension, variable valve timing or even traction control. Instead it's an honest interpretation of a theme that has stood the test of time and, even, found new impetus.

The café racer is alive and well... and I'd rather like a go on the Continental GT!



Royal Enfield Continental GT café racer: a surprising package

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08 FOCUS

ROYAL ENFIELD: WORLD LAUNCH

ENFIELD GETS SERIOUS

The all-new Continental GT cafe racer marks the beginning of a new era for Indian-owned Royal Enfield. Our world first test finds out how the 535cc single shapes up

By Phil West

Pinch me, I must be dreaming. As if last month's all-new Harley (even though it didn't look it) wasn't odd enough. As if the credible reinvention of Indian, bizarre return of Brough and Norton and continuing success of Triumph wasn't equally baffling for a 40-something like me, comes this: a big money world launch for an all-new (well, nearly) Royal Enfield. An Enfield, what's more, built to take on the world.

If I'm surprised it's with good reason – if we're completely honest we ALL are. Although in terms of numbers India's Royal Enfield has long been a big fish (its 100,000-plus annual bike production easily beats that of Triumph, Ducati and more) its actual bikes and world presence has been quite the opposite – far too easy to dismiss.

Until now, the vast majority (over 90%) of Enfield's six-figure production run has been voraciously consumed (there's a waiting list) by the local, utilitarian and budget market. Partly because of the dominance and sheer size of this home market, Enfield, as it admitted this week, didn't take overseas sales very seriously. Until now Enfield simply didn't do swanky, international press launches (this is my first in 25 years of being a bike journo). In fact, until now, Enfield didn't even really do new models, instead being renowned for pumping out, year after year, time-warped, 1950s engineered Bullet 350 and 500cc singles – brand new classics, in effect.

But all that – finally, thankfully – is about to change.

All-new chassis

The launch of this new £5499 Continental GT may, on face value, be just a N Other Royal Enfield – yet another variant of the long-lived, old-school 500cc single that has been spun off into machines like its existing Bullet or Woodsman – but actually it's much more significant than that.

First, the bike itself is a significant step up from Enfields of yore. Yes, the 535 motor is basically a slightly enlarged version of Enfield's staple air-cooled single (which was all-new in 2008). But, for the first time ever, virtually everything else is all-new, too, including frame, suspension, brakes, bodywork and equipment. This simply hasn't happened before.

And not only are the extent of the

Thanks, dad. The Continental GT from 2013 lines up with the 1960s model that provided the inspiration



WHAT'S THE STORY?

Indian-owned Royal Enfield is aiming to join the big boys on the global stage. There's a new factory, ambitions to double production and a plan to grow exports with a family of mid-range, affordable, straight-forward but engaging bikes. The virtually all-new Continental GT is the first fruit of that ambition. This is the first test.

changes significant, how those changes have come about, the investment and commitment that's been made and the overall effect of them on the road, are big steps up, as well.

So for example, to get the handling of this new café racer right, Enfield decreed to not only build an all-new frame – a big enough step in itself – it went to Harris Performance to get it designed. That's the sort of thing that MotoGP teams normally do, not I'll, 'old-fashioned' Enfield.

While to get the styling right, Enfield didn't just copy the original 250GT, it thoroughly researched the whole subject, consulted key historical Enfield design figures and engaged respected British motorcycling design

We believe there's space for a different kind of motorcycling that's fun at real world speeds'

Royal Enfield's Siddharta Lal

consultants, Xenophya (most notably recently responsible for Triumph's Tiger Explorer 1200). It even went as far as talk to old rockers and café racer types.

Reaching out to the world

And second, this bike is the first fruits of a whole cultural change at Royal Enfield in India. The key message at its launch came from no less than Siddharta Lal, the managing director and CEO of Eicher Motors, (top man at Royal Enfield) and driving force behind this whole reinvention of the brand. Lal, or 'Sid' as he's affectionately known by his staff, said: "We want to become a global motorcycle player – that's our number one aim." Time to take note of Royal Enfield.

The new bike is being built at Enfield's all-new, state-of-the-art plant at Oragadam, near Chennai. Capacity this year is pegged at a whopping 175,000, rising to 250,000 in 2014. The facility has been built, however, to allow Enfield to scale production up to 500,000 in the future. And all of THAT's big news – however you slice it.

Don't get me wrong. None of us will be riding around on Royal Enfield superbikes anytime soon. That's not part of the gameplan. What IS however, is a significant drive to expand exports, to improve distribution, dealers and sales support and so on (which partly explains why UK Royal Enfield distribution recently switched from Watsonian-Squire to MotoGB).

In addition, Enfield is introducing a complementary range of RE clothing, in a similar way to Triumph and Harley-Davidson, and, later, accessories.

And at the heart of it all are the bikes, machines which, like the new Continental GT, follow much of Enfield's traditional philosophy, bikes that draw on the firm's British heritage yet which, more and more, they claim, will be geared for the future.

"We believe there's space for a different kind of motorcycling," said 'Sid' Lal at the GT's launch. "Something that's not 150bhp, that doesn't cost the earth, is tactile, fun at real world speeds and engaging."

"Our focus is mid-sized motorcycling. We're already one of the world's biggest players in the sector, mostly because of our sales in India. Hopefully we can become No.1 in the market some time." And he concluded: "Whatever it takes to be a big international player, that's what we'll do."

Credible and authentic

All of which would be little more than monsoon hot air if the Continental GT in the metal and in the riding experience, wasn't a significant step up, too. But I'm happy to report that, for the most part, it is.

Sat in front of London's iconic Ace Café (where better to launch it?) the GT is instantly a handsome, impressive and, crucially, credibly authentic machine. I could nit-pick about the clunkily high-profile Pirellis or the slightly 'cheaty' shorty fender extenders and chromed plastic indicators, but for the most part the GT's 'just right'.

Second, the stuff it's got – its equipment levels and quality – are a far cry from Enfields of old, too. The names Brembo, Pirelli and Harris, as previously mentioned, may be sufficient to have many already sold. But there's plenty more pleasing, chrome-rimmed twin analogue dials with incorporated LCD panels are both bang-up-to-date and appropriately retro, too: contemporary switchgear; smart, chromed bar-end weights and, my favourite, a 'Monza'-alike fuel cap.

It's not perfect, admittedly. That filler's a little flimsy-looking, the switchgear is borderline basic and there's no adjustability on the levers, but, on balance, and for the money – especially compared to some of its obvious rivals – it's more than enough.

Onboard, the classy evocation continues. The GT, compared to most modern bikes, is small, slim and light. Swinging a leg over is no bother – nor getting both feet flat on the ground. The stretch to the bars nowhere near as extreme as its clip-ons suggest, thanks mostly to bolting them above, rather than under, the top yoke. It's light, too. But nor is it cramped, even for a massive lump like me, thanks to good ergonomics.

Kick to start... if you want

The similarly lumpy single starts first time on the button (though there's a bar-mounted choke lever if required and even a kick lever if you want to be truly authentic) then settles into the rumbly idle only a single can generate. Blip the throttle and there's a truly

Continued over



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SEE THE VIDEO
Watch the video version of our Royal Enfield Continental GT test, including onboard footage, on our website
www.motorcyclenews.com

Royal Enfield's plans to break out of its reliance on sales in India starts with the Continental GT



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10 **FOCUS**

fabulous RHHHUMM-BAAAA as the exhaust over-runs: a cacophony that shames bikes like the latest Bonnie (although, to be fair, this bike had the 'loud pipe' option exhaust).

But there's nothing fearsome about the ride. With a familiar Enfield 30bhp or so, there's nothing intimidating or even particularly thrilling here. First gear is fairly tall, which requires clutch slips and masks any extra grunt the 535 has. The gearbox is a little sloppy. Instead the pleasure is in the sound, the vibes and the alloy.

Handling is a pleasure, too, though the Pirellis don't provide massive confidence, the steering's almost ridiculously light, the brakes adequate and

Handling is a pleasure. You truly can have fun hustling this throwback down the leafy lanes'

Phil West

the whole plot fairly solid and secure. You truly can have fun hustling this throwback down the leafy lanes.

It's when the roads open up that traditional Enfield shortcomings raise their heads. Get above 5000rpm or 60mph and, like its forebears, the GT's running out of breath and scattering vibrating vibes through your head, shoulders, knees and toes - well, hands, crotch, feet certainly, and that makes any prolonged fast A-road, dual carriageway or motorway (are you insane?) a chore. 75mph or so is its top whack, a 30-or-40 mile blast my limit. But for an evocative, noisy, engaging rumble to a country pub on a Sunday or a loving gaze in a garage with a cup of char, who cares?



VERDICT
 PHIL WEST,
 EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Riding out of The Ace I felt like a 'Ton up kid' aboard the GT. I could look at it for ages. There's loads of tinkering and polishing I could do: lots of nice clobber I can now buy and, for short, noisy, scratchy hops, the GT is a giggle to ride, too.

If that's what you fancy, the GT's lovely and decent value. At the end of the day, however, the GT's still an Enfield for better and worse: a 29bhp, single-cylinder, short trip machine with old-school appeal. Its performance and comfort limitations on today's roads make medium trips daunting, never mind long ones (the 250cc Suzuki Inazuma twin is smoother and faster). While it's size will put off bigger riders, take all that on board, though, and it's fab.

MOTORCYCLES

What's it got?



The engine's familiar and the design is authentic '60s Enfield. But the chassis is all-new

ENFIELD BIGGEST ENGINE YET

Familiar, new-in-'09, fuel-injected, unit construction single is boosted from 499 to 535cc and remapped to be Royal Enfield's biggest and most powerful engine yet. That said, power is still only 29bhp (up from 27) and the tall gearing masks any added punch. Louder pipe comes with 'high' spec £5499 version.



ALL-NEW HARRIS CHASSIS

New twin-loop frame is designed by Harris Performance. Other names include: Brembo front brake (albeit a basic, twin-piston version and the rear's a cheap copy), Pirelli Sport Demon tyres and twin 'Piggyback', preload adjustable shocks by Paoli. Forks are Enfield's own 41mm teles but with reworked internals.



STYLING

Inspired by original, 'world's fastest' Continental GT250 of 1965 but 'reinterpreted' by British design consultants Xenophya Design. Neat touches include 'Monza-style' fuel cap, fully-chromed headlight, retro, Honda CB1100-alike tallight, contrasting seat stitching and clever 'shorty' mudguards with disguised black extensions.



EQUIPMENT

Also significantly updated. Twin, 'retro' analogue dials incorporate discreet LCD fuel gauge and multifunction odometer. Switchgear is up to date, if a little basic, the mainstand is standard, as are braided steel brake lines while the high-spec, £5499 version as tested gets alloy rims, a louder exhaust, bar end mirrors and a single seat.



THE 1965 ORIGINAL



The Royal Enfield Continental GT from 1965 that inspired the new model. Proves the new bike's authenticity

THE FACTS

ROYAL ENFIELD CONTINENTAL GT

£5199 (£5499 IN THIS SPEC)

- Engine: Air-cooled; 535cc (87 x 80mm), ohv single, 5 gears, chain drive
- Claimed power: 29 bhp @ 5100rpm
- Torque: 32ft-lb @ 4200rpm
- Frame: Tubular steel double cradle, box-section steel swing arm
- Suspension: 41mm telescopic forks, no adjustment, at front. Twin Paoli remote reservoir rear shocks with preload adjuster
- Claimed kerb weight: 194kg
- Front brake: 300mm disc with twin-piston Brembo caliper
- Rear brake: 240mm disc with single-piston caliper
- Front tyre: 100/80 x 18
- Rear tyre: 130/70 x 18
- Fuel capacity: 13.5 litres
- Seat height: 810mm
- Wheelbase: 1361mm

RATING ★★★★★