

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITORS OF MCN

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Love Stebel Horns

I purchased a Stebel horn for my '94 FXDL after reading the article in the May issue. This horn is much bigger than the stock one, so I had to get creative about placement. I made a custom bracket and located it behind the battery box. The installation was easy and this baby is loud!

I have had two instances where a car in front of me started to veer into my lane and would have clipped me. I hit the horn button and both times the drivers jumped and jerked their car back into the other lane expecting to get smacked by a large truck!

Keith Ice
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Alternative To eBay

Thank you for your first in the two-part series on eBay. However, if I may make a suggestion, I think I would try Craigslist first (www.craigslist.org). It has become so widely used as a resource that it is part of the revenue problems facing major daily newspapers. I placed an ad on eBay

for a 2002 VTX 1800C. It cost me almost \$40 to list the bike. I received no bids.

I then put it on Craigslist and it sold the next day. I think eBay is going the way of the manual typewriter, frankly. I'd no sooner get the ad on the web site, than I would receive a phone call and someone would come out, hand me the money, and take the goods.

Inasmuch as it is nice to buy on eBay, Craigslist is local. Dealing with long distance con artists and trusting Paypal is just too much of an inconvenience, and I think that is why Craigslist is today's American marketplace.

Stanley Rocklin
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Mesa, AZ

Stanley, I couldn't agree with you more. My husband recently bought a Ninja 250 from an ad on Craigslist. I'm definitely a fan, but like anything, it's buyer beware.

The main page takes you to listings for the San Francisco Bay area, which is

where it started. Check the right side of the page for listings closer to home: All the US states are represented, along with 22 US cities and 29 Canadian provinces or cities.

—Franke

Rider Training

I am writing in response to an article in your July issue titled "Motorcycle Fatalities, Part 2." I am an MSF RiderCoach in Florida and would like to clarify a few points in the article. Training never has and never will have a large influence on riders who are determined to take unnecessary risks.

David stated in his article that he has "talked to veteran instructors who cringe at the thought of giving a completion card to students who they know are not ready to ride in traffic, even though the student passed the overly simple test."

My more mature students have told me the MSF course helped them realize they were not ready for the road, despite passing the riding test. Mission accomplished! Lives saved!

What about the 16-year-old who raced dirt bikes at the amateur level for the last three years? This person can pass any training course with flying colors, purchase a 600cc sportbike and wrap himself around a telephone pole a week later due to his need for speed. With this in mind, the MSF's greatest impact is reducing the

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number of people who crash while trying to teach themselves to ride. If riders practice their emergency maneuvers on a regular basis, like we encourage them to, and integrate the strategies taught in the MSF course into their riding, this would save many lives also.

In the article David stated, "the most reliable solution seems to be tougher licensing." I couldn't agree with him more! Limit younger riders to smaller bikes for a couple of years. In fact, limit anyone exemplifying a lack of good judgment to smaller bikes for a couple of years. Anyone with a recent DUI, an excessive number of speeding tickets, etc. should be profiled. I like Germany's idea that if people crash due to their poor decisions, the probationary period should start over.

It would be great reading if you did a comprehensive study of Germany and other countries such as England that have very tough licensing laws.

Training is invaluable, but if we think it will make a big impact on the real reasons for the alarmingly high number of fatalities (riders taking unnecessary risks), we are kidding ourselves.

Anthony Brown
Highlands Professional
Motorcycle Training Corp.
Bradenton, FL

Anthony, thanks for your insight into the motorcycle fatality situation. If you use the BRC as a means to "counsel out" riders who recognize they are not ready for the road, that's certainly a good thing, whether or not it's a recognized goal of the MSF. However, while I agree that training can't solve all the problems, I'm of the opinion that better rider training could help reduce nasty—often fatal—crashes, if professionals such as yourself were given the tools to either produce adequately trained street riders or to counsel them out of motorcycling.

I would very much like to see rider training curricula that are comprehensive enough to give new riders the necessary skills and knowledge to survive street riding, tuned to address the needs of riders in a specific geographical area.

Frankly, I'd rather see you as a motorcycle safety instructor, responsible for providing new riders with the necessary skills, than as a "coach" who stands by while students experiment with motorcycles. The current "Experienced Rider Course" is so simplistic and off-target that I don't think it is of any use to experienced riders. And there is very little training available between the novice BRC and track schools.

The military is facing a huge problem with service personnel returning from combat missions; to buy and die on fast motorcycles. Statistically, a Marine is more likely to die in a motorcycle crash on US soil than to be killed in military action in Afghanistan.

And, sadly, the military has been locked into cooperation with the MSF, meaning the only choice a rider in the military has is the BRC, and not more advanced courses that would truly teach street riding skills. There is some hope on the horizon, as different branches of the military consider courses such as Lee Parks' Total Control Advanced Riding Clinic.

I bring up the military motorcycle problem because I think the same issues that allow military riders to die in crashes are prevalent in the general adult motorcycling population.

Whatever the reasons for the increase in motorcycle fatalities, the current MSF courses are not solving the fatality problem.

I have very little faith that the MSF is capable of turning around and returning to the cooperative stance that seemed to have produced reductions in the fatality rate during the 1980s and 1990s. That's why I encourage motorcycle enthusiasts to lobby for state rider training ("motorcycle safety") programs that are totally independent, not controlled by any national motorcycle industry organization.

And I encourage all states to be responsible for developing motorcycle operator tests that adequately determine a rider's skill and knowledge levels—even if those tests would be unpopular with the motorcycle industry.

—David L. Hough

Bike Brite Thumbs-Up

I'm a 20-year subscriber to MCN, and count on your product reviews for a lot of purchases. Your Innovation of the Month story on Bike Brite Moto-Mask reviewed a product I've been using with great results. I sometimes Iron Butt on my '87 Kawasaki Concours and I'd rather be riding than cleaning. (Who wouldn't?) Moto-Mask makes that possible.

I live in coastal Georgia and bugs are generous down here. They wipe off like nothing with Moto-Mask. I used Pledge spray-on furniture wax for years, but it washes off fast in the rain. It does look a little "wavy" when it's on, but not the "orange-peel effect" you mention. And that's a whole lot more attractive than bug guts and scratches.

Frank Goforth
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New KLR A Prettier Ugly Duckling

I am a little perplexed at Kawasaki's update of the KLR650. Having owned three KLRs, the latest a new '07, what we now have is a little schizophrenic.

There was absolutely no question what the pre-'08 KLR was—a simple, go anywhere bulletproof bike you were not afraid to get dirty or drop occasionally. Put steel brake lines, Galfer pads, fork brace, and Progressive Springs on it and it would stop and turn just fine. No need for wave rotors. And they still did not upgrade to the steel lines, brace, or upgrade the fork springs. Put some nerf bars and a pump guard on it and you could drop it all day long and not hurt it. Put some aluminum panniers and a top case on it, and you could go anywhere you wished.

Now you gotta worry about expensive plastic bodywork, new gauges, etc. Kudus, however, to the upgraded amps, but I never had any problem with heated grips, clothing.

Now we have what Kawasaki must think is a prettier ugly duckling. I admit that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but the old KLR was okay by me.

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Modulator Origins

Modulators are a powerful safety tool for lots of reasons. I was tech editor at *Rider* magazine during the mid-'70s into the '80s. I did some feature articles and product evaluations on auxiliary lighting, which lead to reading studies of conspicuity to prevent accidents.

At the same time Herb Thrower came to us to show off his "Q-Switch" which he developed after much R&D and capital investment. His invention, the headlamp modulator unit, features all that is common today in commercial modulators: high beam soft modulation and a light sensor automatically switching to normal high beam in tunnels and low light. It had cooling fins, was a couple of inches square and fairly easy to install.

He also spearheaded the battle for modulator legality—successfully petitioning the federal DOT for a long time and at great expense.

So I did the first moto press tests and product evaluations. I now have more than 25 years and hundreds of thousands of miles of modulator experience using H-4 55/65-watt and 80/100-watt bulbs. In dozens of cases, it has prevented would-be left turners and cross-street traffic from pulling into my pathway.

I believe headlamp modulators for street motorcycles should be standard equipment, but at least any smart rider caring about his/her skin and life should run the triangle of light layout centerpieced with a good accessory modulator.

My modulated headlamps have lasted many years and many tens of thousands of miles, with the low beams going out first—which tells you something about soft modulation of high beams!

Alan Tratner
Santa Barbara, CA

Buell Use-lysses

After reading the catalog of failures that occurred during your 17,000+ mile test of the Buell Ulysses, I agree with Gary Prickett's summary. I was therefore rather surprised by the laudatory remarks that followed by testers Walt Fulton and Dave Searle.

Notwithstanding the many Buell innovations, surely reliability should be the first criterion for any motorcycle, especially if it is your one and only mount. And particularly if it is used to head off into the back of beyond. Kind of gives new meaning to "adventure" touring, doesn't it?

When, and if, Buell follows BMW and KTM with Dakar Rally successes, they will gain more credibility, though I doubt they would take that risk.

Bob Tomlin
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Scottsdale, AZ

Thurlow Riding Gloves Out Of Business?

I need a new pair of Thurlow deerskin riding gloves. However, when I checked the Thurlow Leather site, I found that one is unable to order through the site (the online order form never opens).

When I did an Internet search to find a phone number (also unavailable at the Thurlow web site), I could not find a phone number for them. Do you know if they are still in business? If so, do you know how I could contact them?

If they're no longer in business, do you have a recommendation for someplace I could buy good quality deerskin leather riding gloves like Thurlow made?

Fred Porter
fporter16@yahoo.com

Fred, I went to the Thurlow Gloves web site, and their domain is for sale. That led me to believe they are out of business, and after a bit more checking, I'm pretty sure that they're out of business. Every phone number associated with them is disconnected.

Aerostich sells deerskin gloves, and former MCN Editor Lee Parks sells them too: www.leeparksdesign.com

Tip: To find a phone number for a company that does not list one on its site, go to www.networksolutions.com/whois/index.jsp and enter the domain name (for example, mcnews.com). Then the information the registration agency has will be displayed, including an administrative/billing contact and technical contact, usually the person who maintains the site.

—Franke

Another Device To Reduce Plantar Fasciitis Pain

I read with interest flash gordon's article on plantar fasciitis, and wanted to pass along another treatment. A while back my wife discovered a company called Heel That Pain (www.heel-that-pain.com) that manufactures orthotic rubber heel cups that are inserted into the shoes to help maintain proper foot shape to reduce or eliminate pain. Both she and I have found great relief from these inserts, as have the four or five people she's recommended them to.

They're reasonably priced at \$34.95 plus shipping—well worth trying if you suffer from this condition.

Bob Meador
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BikeSafe North Carolina Sounds Excellent!

Sgt. Brown,

I just read the article ("BikeSafe NC Takes A Different Approach," August). I was so impressed with your program that I wanted to write a note of congratulations and encouragement. What a tremendous initiative.

I learned to ride in downtown San Francisco, CA. After riding with my permit for about six months, I figured I was ready for my motorcycle test, but I had no idea what it consisted of. I just assumed someone would follow me on a prescribed route through the city and make sure that I was a safe rider. When I showed up to the test and learned it was all about clutch control and figure 8s in parking lots I couldn't believe it. I was shocked that they felt that my ability to feather a clutch and throttle was enough to determine whether I was a competent motorcyclist.

You should be very proud of your accomplishment. I sincerely hope that programs like yours become commonplace throughout the entire country on a voluntary basis, and am convinced it would cause a tremendous improvement in motorcycle safety. Bravo!

Michael McMahon
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Kansas Rider Education Program Similar to BikeSafe

Here in Kansas we have a program that teaches on-street riding by actually going out on the roads and highways in our communities. I have been a Kansas Driver Education II Instructor for 25 years and I have always taught beginning riders through an on-street component.

It seems that the BikeSafe program takes already licensed riders and seeks to share with them additional information on how to coexist with others. The Kansas Advanced Motorcycle Safety Education program has a similar structure and I hope that the North Carolina BikeSafe programs fare better on the open market than our program.

It has been my experience that economics drives motorcycle safety education. Unless Honda Riders Club of America and the Harley Owners Group recognize the BikeSafe program and provide reimbursement to their members the way they have for MSF courses, then there is little incentive for people to take the BikeSafe program.

In a recent letter, another rider coach observed that the Basic RiderCourse does not teach experience. I agree with his assertion, but as a person who is preparing individuals to go out into traffic with a course completion slip in their hand, I feel much better when I have provided at least one full hour of on-street experience to the individuals who take their course completion slip from my hand.

With the program that I provide, it is possible that they may have as much as two hours of on-street riding experience on one day. No one receives their course completion documents without on-street riding experience. Every MSF beginner course in Kansas has the option to provide on-street riding as a part of their course.

It is expensive to provide on-street riding as a part of the training and few rider coaches have had the training to provide on-street instruction.

Terry E. Weldin
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Correction:

Honda Motor Co. is the world's largest motorcycle manufacturer, with an annual output of 12 million. A Chinese company, China South, was erroneously named as the largest motorcycle manufacturer in our August bulletins.