

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITORS OF MCN

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 Over the Internet to: **editor@mcnews.com**
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Re: Color

Congratulations on your conversion to a color format! I trust you will get your printing color registration issues sorted out; my copy at least had good registration on some pages, but awful on others. Time for a discussion with the printing company. Still, once you get that sorted, I'm betting it will be great!

Ken Harbeck
 Overland Park, KS

Ken, we weren't satisfied either, but then we found some readers had received the April issue with missing and duplicated pages. So MCN moves to a new printing house this month. Thanks!

I am your typical subscriber: well-educated, successful in business, a longtime avid motorcyclist and a highly discriminating consumer. Like many loyal subscribers, I have developed a strong sense of kinship with the editorial staff whose

journalistic accuracy and adventurous spirit have been the backbone of this "plain Jane's" highly informative magazine. I regarded the anticipated change in format, however slight, with some degree of skepticism.

With my March issue in hand, I was immediately impressed by its simplistic, understated and visually appealing improvements. With my doubts abated and MCN's integrity remaining intact, I am cognizant that my best apology to David Searle and my compatriots would be to spread the good news!

Thanks for an even greater "colorful" magazine and keep up the good work.

Larry Torrisi
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 Ardsley, NY

Vibration On Ducati & B-King

Dave, as a fellow journalist (I have published about a dozen motorcycle tests in my syndicated newspaper column over

the last couple of years) your new color look is tremendous.

In your Ducati 848 test, you didn't say anything about vibration or a lack thereof. Is there any? Ditto for the B-King. It is something you usually talk about, as engine smoothness really enhances the joys of riding while reducing fatigue.

Larry Weitzman
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 Rescue, CA

Larry, thanks for your comments on the color! The 848 is much smoother than the 1098 and for that reason alone would be a superior choice in my opinion. It will accelerate smoothly from 3500 rpm (as noted), which is very good for a Ducati supersport. The B-King, being a four-cylinder, is terrifically smooth running and is perhaps the nicest mega motor ever built. In fact, we have a 1000-mile Iron Butt qualifier in the works for the B-King (fitted with a few Suzuki accessories), to see how it handles an intense tour. Stay tuned.

Pictures Not Always Worth 1000 Words

The person who said "a picture is worth a thousand words" was wrong. Paint me a picture of the Gettysburg Address, draw me a sketch of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream," or photograph the Sermon on the Mount.

Motorcycle
CONSUMER NEWS

Volume 39 / Number 5 May 2008

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Motorcycle Consumer News®
 is published monthly by
BOWTIE
NEWS
 (A Division of BowTie, Inc.)

NORMAN L. RIDKER, Chairman of the Board; JEFF SCHARF, Vice President, Advertising; CRAIG WISDA, Controller; DOLORES WHITLO, Circulation Director; CHERYL DAY, Collateral Sales Director; RICH GOMEZ, Manufacturing Director; MELISSA KAUFFMAN, JUNE KIKUCHI, Editorial Directors; CHERRI BUCHANAN, Human Resources Director, ALLISON WATANABE, Chief Information Officer.

Motorcycle Consumer News (ISSN 1073-9408) is published monthly by BowTie News, a division of BowTie Inc., 3 Burroughs, Irvine, CA 92618-2804. Corporate headquarters located at 2401 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90057-0900. Periodicals Postage Paid at Santa Ana, CA 92799 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Motorcycle Consumer News, P.O. Box 37191, Boone, IA 50037-0191. © 2008 by BowTie Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction of any material from this issue in whole or in part is strictly prohibited.

For subscription inquiries or change of address:
 Motorcycle Consumer News
 P.O. Box 37191, Boone, IA 50037-0191
 Tel: 888-333-0354 • Fax: 515-433-1013
 Visit us online: www.custmag.com/mcn

Back issues and reprints: Ian Smith Information, 303-777-2385, www.mcreports.com

Subscription rate in U.S. and Possessions: \$44 for 12 issues, \$65 for 24 issues. Canadian and foreign surface, add \$18 extra per year payable in U.S. funds. Single copy price, \$7. Please allow 6-8 weeks for new subscriptions to begin. When changing address, give six weeks notice and address label from latest copy as well as new address with ZIP code. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please write us at Privacy Policy, P.O. Box 6040, Mission Viejo, CA 92690 or send us an e-mail at privacy@bowtieinc.com. Please view our Privacy Policy at www.bowtieinc.com.

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Publications Mail Agreement No. 40612608, Registration No. R126851765
 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Bleuchip International, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, CANADA

Printed in the United States of America
Motorcycle Consumer News
Accepts No Paid Advertising

I understand your pride in bringing color to your great magazine. But the words are what matters, not your pictures. Words are all we have to communicate effectively with each other. The words you use to describe the efficiency of the Ducati 848 in your March issue are what cause me to know the potential of the machine and the thrill of riding one. I can “see” the majesty of State Route 60 through the Georgia Triangle as you describe it in your Great Destination column very clearly without pictures.

Can you photograph the thrill of motorcycling? Can images describe the sensation a rider gets every time they insert their key in the ignition? Please e-mail me a picture of the camaraderie shared by members of a group as they ride through the Canadian Rockies.

Your expertise is to describe to me in words the wonders of every imaginable aspect of motorcycle riding, and you do it better than any other motorcycle magazine in print. Please continue to do so. And yes, the pictures are lovely.

Nelson Kaesberg
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Apache Junction, AZ

Nelson, thank you for giving perspective to our efforts. Glad you like the new look also.

B-King Score

I got my latest MCN today, in color. Nice, but not necessary. I hope it doesn't cause an increase in cost. The articles about the Ducati and the B-King cause me to ask a question. If you add up the score assigned to various items, the total doesn't fit. Do you like Ducati better?

Al Wynn
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Canfield, OH

Al, ouch! Good catch, the B-King's total deserved another half dot!

Danny Coe would choose the Ducati, the rest of us would choose the B-King hands down!

Better In Black & White

I thought I received a new magazine this month or at least I didn't recognize MCN since it had color. I read your Rebirth editorial. I may be in the minority, but I preferred the black and white MCN better than the colored. As a 10-year MCN subscriber, I would like to see you continue to differentiate yourself from other magazines and not move toward what the rest of the motorcycle magazines are doing. I hope you will reconsider and use the money you spent on color for how-to

or other articles that we have been graced with, which other magazines don't seem to grasp. Thanks for listening.

Bob Dombrowe
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Bob, the letters are running about 20:1 in favor of the color change, but we respect your opinion. Don't worry, we will continue to cover subjects no one else does.

No Price Increase

I'm glad your staff is so enthused about your new color format, but as a reader, it has no bearing whatsoever on my decision to subscribe to your “100% subscriber supported” magazine. I've subscribed since MCN's inception because I'm confident that your well-done reviews will be least affected by commercial considerations and therefore most objective. I have every issue on file.

My concern is that the pressure of increased printing costs might compromise that objectivity, or lead to increased subscription rates.

B. Jan
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San Diego, CA

B, we know that the only reason we continue to exist at all is because we are always on guard to maintain our objectivity.

Also, if the responses we have seen so far are any indication, increased numbers of subscribers will be the best defense against increasing subscription costs.

MCN Starts Baby's Journey

I would like to thank you for the wonderful job with the MCN “Rebirth” issue and to recant my survey response in which I answered that color was not important to me. It's fantastic!

The reason for the thanks stems from an event that occurred a few days ago. I was surprised to see the colorful issue on my dining table—and with the very bike I'd love to own on the cover, no less! I scooped it up on my way to the baby's playroom, lay down on my back, and immediately began reading.

My 9-month-old son, Ba Thanh, loves books and magazines—especially Motorcycle Consumer News; but it must have been the colors that caught his eye and brought him crawling from across the room so quickly. “Not this one!” I told him, determined to keep this issue in prime drool-free condition.

I closed the cover and held it up and away from his outstretched fingers with the brilliant red Ducati 848 facing us. And then it happened. He stood up, carefully lifted up his left foot, and then placed it

down a few inches forward. “Did he just take his first step!?” I moved the magazine a little further, the Ducati just beyond his fingers' reach. He responded by slowly lifting his right foot and placing it down another few inches. Yes! He really took his first steps for Dad! As if those weren't enough, he repeated the performance with a third step!

It has been said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. In this case, three. Thanks for helping inspire Ba Thanh to begin his journey. Now, I wonder if this justifies adding a shiny Ducati 848 to my garage? I'm sure he'll grow into it just fine.

Luis Santiago
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Pasadena, CA

Luis, I love it! As a proud grandfather, I can really appreciate the joy a little guy brings to your life. Thanks for your story, I'm taking a copy of your letter home for my wife.

—Dave

DR650 Mods

Thank you for having some dual-sport content. I know we DS enthusiasts are in the minority compared to cruiser and sportbike riders. When you get bored riding the same old roads, get a DS bike and a topo map and explore places you have been by but never through.

I don't think you can go wrong picking any of the 650s you tested. I have a DR650 and have owned a KLR650. The DR is often overlooked and put down as being old tech. Old tech is simple tech. Not everyone will need to do all the same mods you did to be happy. If you are not short, replace the fork and shock springs for your weight and the stock sidestand length will be fine. Zip tie the left hand-guard and it works fine though you won't have the lever protection.

Instead of adding a centerstand, I cut off an old crutch to prop the wheels off the ground for wheel removal or roadside chain maintenance. It fits in the Moto Sport Dirt Bags along with the tire repair kit. I use a cheap bike lift at home.

I bought 1" bar risers that were cheaper and easier to install than new bars. An IMS gastank gives me a 250-mile range for about \$225. A Corbin seat was \$260 and well worth it. Givi sells a small topbox for about \$90 that comes with a universal mount that fits a luggage rack. I bought a spare mount for my Tiger for \$25. I found the Suzuki luggage rack at a dealer and got it at a discount because it was in inventory a long time.

I added a Scottoiler for the chain for less maintenance on the road. As you can

tell, my DR is set up as a mini adventure-tourer. It commutes, tours, explores dirt roads and trails and is low maintenance. Even with the mods I have done, it is still thousands of dollars cheaper than some other bikes in its class.

Beware, a 650 dual-sport can get you in trouble. Parking lot speed bumps become wheelie bumps and curbs become jumps. Ditches and grassy hills are just shortcuts. Crowded parking lots are just trials sections. You may find that your bigger bikes stay parked more because it's so easy to ride the thumper.

Gus Tinsley
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Price Fixing And Retail Survival

Excellent article about the Supreme Court's decision to allow manufacturers to set minimum advertised prices (Is Price Fixing Now Legal, March). However, I thought it was unfortunate that you used the pejorative term "price fixing." In reality, retailers still have plenty of arrows in their quivers besides price that they can use to satisfy their customers.

As a consumer, I naturally want to buy at the lowest possible cost. But, I also want the widest possible selection in quality, brands, sizing, applications, colors, etc. On top of which, I want to be able to choose where I make my purchase. If discounting is carried to its ultimate conclusion, we all will be shopping only at Wal-Mart or Amazon.com, as the retailers with the deepest pockets will be the sole survivors. I like to go to my local shop and know that I have a decent shot at getting what I need, even though I may pay a bit more for it. I am not prepared to lose that choice. If a retailer can't make a fair margin, that choice will disappear.

A manufacturer who sets a minimum ad price above what competitors are offering for similar products will be crushed. But I want to see the little guys (local retailers) have a fighting chance.

Scott Houseman
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Fuse Block Source

In the January issue, there was an article called "Wire Without Fire." In this article, there was a fuse block. I have tried to find something similar to this locally with no success. Any help you can give me in finding this fuse block would be greatly appreciated.

bruno705@comcast.net

We checked with Dale Coyner, and this is what he reports: The fuse block is the Motorcycle Circuit Manager, available

from Whitehorse Gear, part number FUSB. Here's the link: www.whitehorsepress.com/product_info.php?products_id=5255

Dale reports: "I like this block because it has both positive and negative terminals and is designed for marine applications, so it is sturdy. The manufacturer is Blue Sea Systems (www.blueseasystems.com)."

Thanks flash!

flash, I suffered from an undiagnosed/undiagnosable skin condition for more than 20 years—itching from a little below the knees to just above the ankles. Crazy, maddening itching, usually in the winter when the air is dry, and usually at night. Itching so bad I would scratch until I drew blood. Itching that would wake me at night, leaving me tired the next day. Itching that made me want to rip my skin off. Nothing I tried stopped it—no lotion, cream, ointment or salve. Near the end of your column, when I read about ichthammol ointment, I figured it was worth a try.

MCN in hand, I went to the local pharmacy. The good Dr. Lee read the sentences I pointed to in your column, shook his head, and said, "That's old medicine." He ordered it for me anyway, and told me I could pick the ointment up in the morning. It works! Yes! Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Jim Vaughn
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Arlington, VA

Road To Everywhere

Fred, I have been on this road since my first ride in 1938. I saw dust on my bike in Bend, OR in the morning, then had lemon pie and black coffee in Vermont, scallops in Digby, Nova Scotia, then ran into rain in Tennessee and traffic in New Jersey. Then onto the Road to the Sun in Montana. I ran into "Snake" in Wyoming and boiled in the sun in Huntsville, AL.

The road is always there, just change the oil, fill up the gastank and head out, no plans needed, the road will take you there. The old Indian will be there and guide you all the way, one just has to listen. He speaks and sounds like a soft breeze as the sun comes up over the lakes and trees.

"Clyde the Old Guy"
dotclyde2@peoplepc.com

ST1300 Stability Debate

After reading the latest comment on the Honda ST1300's stability, I needed to weigh in. I own three motorcycles, and anytime I want to get out and go some distance, it's on the ST1300. I live in the Mojave Desert and cope with occasional

strong winds and crosswinds. I have had my ST over 100 mph many times and have never experienced the instability some have complained about. This may be something that affects particular bikes or happens in particular circumstances.

My ST1300 is very sensitive to tire pressure and I always keep it at the recommended 42 psi. On a trip to Texas, I travelled at 110–120 mph for an hour at a time and never experienced this instability. This problem is not universal to the ST1300 and I would suggest that anyone interested in an ST1300 ride that particular one to see if it exhibits this characteristic.

Don Clutter
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I have deep reservations about the credibility of Ron Hall's assessment of the stability of the Honda ST1300. I've ridden many models of Hondas over the years, from their Rebel 250 to the GL1800. My current motorcycle of choice is the ST1300. I've taken it coast to coast twice, at speeds I'd rather not mention, but it is safe to say I've seen triple digits. I've passed countless 18-wheelers and never once encountered the instability mentioned by Mr. Hall.

I am a 62-year-old female weighing just 130 lbs. soaking wet, so size nor strength control my ride. I'd like to suggest that the owner of this particular ST take it into the shop for a mechanical evaluation. Perhaps there is a safety issue which must be addressed. This is the most stable motorcycle I've ever owned and certainly can hold its own against its big brother the GL1800 Gold Wing.

Carole Keyser
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Lane Change Danger

A friend recently crashed his 2007 Honda VTX. Unfortunately, he suffered a head injury and can't remember a lot of details. What he does remember is being in the left lane, attempting to go to the right lane in traffic then waking up in the hospital. Do you know of any similar problems with steering on the VTX?

Jerry Aaron
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Jerry, we have not heard of anything similar. Was he attempting a sudden lane change due to some imminent peril?

Unless a rider has learned to counter-steer intuitively, the need to make a sudden change in direction can cause them to steer into a turn, going the opposite direction of the intended maneuver. This is a bigger issue than most would admit.