

**Hough, How Many Fingers?**

David, I have read both of your best-known books and have been a rider during two distinct periods in my life—my early twenties and mid-fifties. When I took the basic MSF course several years ago I was admonished for not using all four fingers of my right hand when I braked. I found (and still do) that by using my forefinger and middle finger on the brake and the rest of my hand to gradually decrease throttle I had better control and I achieved a smoother stop. I believe that, in effect, I am braking with both wheels (brake on front and engine compression of the rear). Where do you stand on this point? Thanks for all the good work.

Your books are invaluable, and highly readable to boot.

PeterAnstey  
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*Peter, the MSF and state rider training programs in general do a great job, but unfortunately many programs have fostered a "control freak" attitude, full of "always" or "never" comments.*

*My attitude is to learn the dynamics of what's happening, then adapt your tactics to whatever works best for you and your machine. One reason for admonishing riders to use all four fingers over the front brake lever was that some big bikes had squishy front brakes that would allow the lever to contact the grip, with potential injury to the rider's fingers. But for other riders, and today's bikes, one or two fingers can be fine, with no potential for lack of stopping power or dented fingers.*

*There is a difference between using a trailing throttle to decelerate and hard braking. Engine compression is too unpredictable in quick stop situations. I would suggest that you get in the habit of using the rear brake pedal rather than the throttle for "rear wheel braking." For normal stops—say approaching a controlled intersection—I blip the throttle, shift down to decelerate, then squeeze the clutch and apply both brakes to bring the bike to a stop. For quick stops, I roll off, squeeze the clutch, and apply both brakes to the maximum just short of skidding either tire.*

—David L. Hough  
Contributing Editor

**BMW Responds to Recalls Article**

Fred—thank you for your article on Safety Recalls. BMW Motorcycles commends you on bringing this information to the public. I must, however, take exception to your caption next to the picture of our F650GS Dakar. The recall you are referring to did not involve a tendency for the fuel tank to "crack open," rather there

was a potential for a fuel leak to occur around the point where the charcoal canister mounts on the fuel tank. Of the 417 motorcycles that were involved with the recall, less than 120 were "sold" and delivered to retail customers before the recall was initiated. The rest were held by the retailers until the replacement tank was installed, and then offered for sale. BMW Motorcycles contacted each of the 120 customers by phone as well as first class mail to make them aware of the recall details. BMW Motorcycles' completion rate for this recall is 94%, a full 34 percentage points above the average for motorcycle recalls as estimated in your article. Even with our 94% completion percentage, we continue to reach out to the owners that have not responded so that so we may consider the action completed.

Once again, thank you for this public service.

Thomas Plucinsky  
BMW Motorcycles

**Product Tests: The Hard Way**

I am a new reader to your fine pages, and want to compliment you on what I have found to be one of the most informative and enjoyable publications about motorcycling. I am responding to the recent chain of letters regarding the summer line of jackets, and more specifically, the Joe Rocket Phoenix jacket. I recently had a late night get-off while wearing a Phoenix, and thought I'd give the results for your running tally.

I hit a fresh median in a construction zone at about 40 mph, causing a rather rapid and high altitude departure from my Suzuki. My gear survived as follows: Shoei RF900 2001 series TC3 helmet: Visor ripped free from one side allowing the departure and subsequent demise of my glasses; every side of the helmet marred by 1/4" to 1/2"-wide scrapes, gouges, and divots. I ended up with no damage whatsoever to my head, face or neck, even after somersaulting to the ground, and skittering across each side of my head several times. I had no whiplash, neckstrain, or even a headache. I cannot praise this helmet enough, and will have an exact replacement as soon as possible.

Teknic race gloves: Being tossed around in total darkness overcomes the instinct to reach for the ground, so my gloves never made any significant contact with anything. I hope not to get the opportunity to test them further.

Joe Rocket Phoenix Jacket: Main impact on upper right shoulder, followed by a slide on the back, two solid tumbles, and then a considerably long slide on the right arm. The rear mesh and padding held up excellently, and did not even allow bruising. The jacket fuzzed up all across the back, all the

way to the extended back cover/kidney pad extension at the bottom, but never gave out. The right sleeve allowed sliding to occur on the elbow plate, and did blow the seam on the inside below the armpit, but never allowed my skin to contact the road. I did have an amazingly active funnybone for two weeks, but not a single sign of road-rash or severe bruising.

Levi's blue jeans: One hole through the left knee where a piece of gravel punched a small hole in my knee. All other skidding was handled by the jacket.

Hi Tech Magnum boots: Never blew a seam, but they could not cushion any of the impact. The end result was a double stress fracture of the right heel, and a dislocated left ankle. I urge all street riders to consider buying a rigidly supportive motorcycle boot rather than relying on work-grade footwear. I will be investing in some other street/race boot as soon as I am able.

Sorry to be long-winded, but hopefully some of the above will help inform, as I would hate to have anyone fall short on safety because of improper gear. I hate to repeat what everyone says, but \$300 now for boots is cheaper than \$3,000 later for the emergency room. I do think that I may be looking for the Joe Rocket Meteor as a replacement upgrade to the Phoenix, but will have to see what time, temperature, and finances dictate.

Please keep up the great work on your publication (as I have a lot of time on my hands right now to catch up with your old issues), and consider me a new, loyal reader.

Peter Hedegor  
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**Corbin Feedback: Pro**

After reading all of the complaints about Corbin seats, I feel I should tell my story.

I purchased a Corbin seat for my Suzuki VX-800 from Corbin at Americade in Lake George, NY, about two years ago.

The salesman was thorough in describing the seat and the break-in period for the foam and hardware (the break-in has gone as he described). They held onto my stock seat so I could try out the new one, and return it if I didn't like it.

During the one-hour trip home that night the hardware in the passenger seat (for the optional backrest) numbed my wife's entire back. The next day I returned to their trailer and explained the problem. The same salesman explained a custom seat could be made without the hardware for the backrest.

He said this would be done at no extra charge and shipped directly to me. I agreed to try this and was ready to turn in the seat I bought the day before. The salesman asked me how I had found the Corbin seat and I

told him it was much more comfortable than the stock seat. The salesman offered to let me keep the seat I had originally purchased, that way I could use the stock seat when I was two-up and the Corbin seat when I was solo, until I got the new seat. I agreed and received the new custom saddle a few weeks later, at which point I shipped back the one I had originally purchased. The only extra cost to me was shipping the first seat back.

I was more than impressed with Corbin's customer service during this purchase and would not hesitate to buy from them again. I find the seat very comfortable and of high quality. The passenger seat, without the backrest hardware, is very comfortable for my wife, also. I'm not saying the company is perfect and the complaints are unfounded. However, I hope you will consider the positive experiences, also. I don't think your readers should get the impression every deal Corbin makes is a nightmare. I'm sure there are many Corbin customers out there with experiences like mine.

By the way, you guys put out a great magazine! It is 10 times more useful than the ones with the "pretty pictures!"

Tony Clay  
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**Subject: ST 1300 Stability**

My wife and I are avid readers of MCN. It is informative and generally accurate. However, the review of the ST1300 in the latest issue troubles us. We are very interested in the bike and have been following its roll-out progress carefully. Your commentary was quite positive until the very end when you commented that the bike "danced around a bit" at very high speeds (not much of a concern to us) and "even at high freeway speeds, has a slightly nervous sensation" (of great concern to us). It seemed like such a throw-away line coming at the end of a favorable review, and without any explanation or discussion, especially as the bike is meant to be a sport-tourer.

If it is nervous at high speeds and unstable at freeway speeds, it fails as either a sport or tourer ride. Please explain the comment. Thanks.

Sheldon I. Hirshon  
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*Sheldon—Walt Fulton, who rode the ST1300 at top speed during our performance testing, complained that it didn't feel settled and danced around, and I also noticed that at high freeway speeds (traffic travelling 80+ is not uncommon on California freeways), the bike was slightly nervous, but far from "unstable." It's not a major problem. The nervous feeling increased with the height of the windshield,*

*and it is likely a combination of steering geometry and wind pressure effects. The old ST1100 was more stable, although much less sporty than the new ST1300.*

*Hope that helps to ease your mind. All of us here at MCN would be very happy to own an ST1300.*

—Dave Searle

**Proper Satellite Radio Installation For Greater Clarity**

I have watched the expansion of interest in satellite radio, and generally agree with statements about its practicality—whether on two wheels or four. (I dislike managing CDs in the car so much that the same six discs have lived in the changer for the last four months.) However, your Gold Wing test installation article requires clarification. The ideal way to connect a satellite radio receiver (or a CD player for that matter), requires an auxiliary input directly to the amplifier section of the vehicle's AM/FM radio.

Admittedly, a radio containing an AUX/CD input may be an additional component of the \$1,092 CD changer upgrade/option, and may not be available in the standard unit. FM modulators work well enough as an alternative, but have a couple of shortcomings worth mentioning. At real issue is the statement: "The music and dialogue are CD quality..." While the satellite receiver may indeed produce CD-quality output, an installation which utilizes an FM modulator to bridge the device to the radio is technically limited by the output quality (and idiosyncrasies) of FM tuner circuitry. Signal conversion and compression causes some audible distortion and loss of dynamic range not experienced with a direct connection. It's questionable whether it would matter on a bike, what with ambient road noise, but a discerning ear might detect it in a motorcycle at rest.

More significantly, you must choose between just a couple of FM frequencies to use for the interface to the AM/FM unit. The initial selection is made on the FM modulator unit, and (when it is powered on) causes that position on the radio dial to be dedicated to the purpose. For that reason, you need to choose the frequency that is not already in use for broadcast in your area. When traveling cross country, you are likely to pass through areas which do broadcast on that frequency. In that event, you will likely have signal interference, for which the only solution is switching the FM modulator's output to the alternate interface frequency. It is easy enough to retune the radio, but it also requires getting at the switch on the FM modulator.

You need to think ahead about how you will access the FM modulator when decid-

ing its installed location. Otherwise, what effort are you really saving over managing a changer full of CDs?

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**BMW F650CS Needs Recall**

On Sunday, my wife and I went for our club ride, I on my BMW R1150GS and Stephanie on her new BMW F650CS. During the ride Stephanie said that her bike was making a clunking noise. I thought it was the motor backfiring through the exhaust. A few miles later I noticed that she was no longer behind me and went back to check. Stephanie was on the side of the road and said the bike was handling terribly and was making an awful sound. When we checked the bike we were amazed to find the rear belt sprocket separating. We had the bike towed to the shop and luckily the owner was there to accept the bike. The next day, we met with the BMW regional representative at the shop, and when the shop owner explained the damage to the rep, he stated that BMW was aware of the problem! He further stated that a recall would be coming. He stated that the sprocket was known to be of poor quality, that others had cracked and that a new manufacturer had been found. Why weren't the dealers/owners informed?

When we came home I picked up my copy of MCN and read the articles on the recalls. I also thought of all the faults that the manufacturers were trying to hide.

BMWNA stated that they will fix the bike, but what worries me is, what other faults are known but not made public? We will see how this will turn out.

I love my GS (just returned from a 9,000-mile trip on it), and we have owned six other BMWs that are defect-free. Hopefully, this will be taken care of and no other incidents will happen.

Ed Buelsing  
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*Ed, the BMW rep was telling you the truth and the recall has been announced. See this month's Bulletins for the latest updates from NHTSA.*

**Significant Others**

August 2002 issue was an excellent one for your content and layout. This was the first issue my wife read before me, mostly due to the "How-To" article, and I was turning some wrenches on my bike. After she read the article, every five minutes she'd ask me if I'd read it yet. I now know I'm not the only one learning these rules the hard way!

Dave Grant  
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