

First Gear Warm & Safe Dual Remote Control Heat-Troller /Generation 4 Heated Liner

Heat-Troller ●●●●●/Generation 4 Liner ●●●●●○

review by Moshe K. Levy

AFTER MCN's HEATED Riding Gear Comparison went to press (April 2010) Warm & Safe introduced a new version of its Heat-Troller. Unlike all of the controllers previously tested, this one uses a remote control, meaning there is no direct connection between the heated gear and the controller itself. Instead, the remote control communicates wirelessly with a receiver, which is placed inside the jacket liner pocket. The receiver makes the hard-wire connection between the power source from the motorcycle and the input connections on the gear. This model also has a dual output, meaning two separate pieces of gear can be powered independently of each other.

The remote control and the receiver are very easy to synchronize. The process involves turning the controller on and off quickly three times and then plugging the receiver to power within 10 seconds. Once they are synchronized, you never have to do it again. At 0.92" high x 2.2" deep x 2.4" wide, including the knobs, the controller itself is substantially smaller and lighter than the hard wired Heat-Troller we reviewed in April. And because it doesn't have any bulky power wires coming out of it, it's much easier to mount with the included velcro strip than the traditional Heat-Troller. The remote control even comes with a carrying strap, much like a camera, for quick portability between motorcycles. Power for the remote comes from a commonly available and inexpensive CR2032 coin cell battery, which should last a



full season with normal use. Functionality is the same as traditional heat controllers: Just turn the marked knobs to adjust the heat output of the gear to your preference.

We tested the Dual Remote Control Heat-Troller with W&S's new Generation 4 heated jacket liner, which improves upon the Firstgear W&S liner we reviewed in April, with upgraded heating elements, illuminate reflective piping on the rear sleeves and collar and the addition of a hanger loop. These improvements have made the already class-leading liner even better. Heating performance was slightly improved from the very good levels previously reported for the Firstgear version, and the addition of reflective material was most appreciated for conspicuity at night. Better yet, both the older W&S Generation 3 and the new Generation 4 liners feature a dedicated pocket designed specifically to hold the W&S remote receiver.

We also tested the Dual Remote Control Heat-Troller with other liners, including my 10-year-old Gerbing's liner and the new Microwire version reviewed in April. It functioned flawlessly with both, and the compact receiver was easily stored in the left front pocket of either liner. There's no reason why it shouldn't work with almost any other brand of heated gear also.

The Dual Remote Control Heat-Troller is a welcome nail in the coffin of archaic and cumbersome hard-wired knob controllers. It allows straightforward mounting, vastly improved ergonomics and effortless portability between multiple bikes. Nicely done!

First Gear Warm & Safe Dual Remote Control Heat-Troller, \$139.95; Generation 4 Heated Jacket Liner, \$224.95—FirstGear, 4900 Alliance Gateway Fwy., Fort Worth, TX 76177; www.firstgear-sa.com

BMW Allround Boots ●●●●● review by Moshe K. Levy

REGULAR READERS MIGHT remember the glowing reviews lavished on our Sidi On-Road Sympatex test boots (MCN November 2007). They lasted through 100,000 miles of brutal all-season commuting, as well as many hours off-road hiking, snowmobiling, and working outdoors before finally calling it quits. With the Sidis retired, we decided to test BMW's entry-level Allround boots next. Though relatively inexpensive by premium boot standards, the Italian-made Allrounds still boast many standard features serious riders look for. The exterior is comprised of thick 1.8mm leather and Cordura inserts, along with the requisite Gore-Tex membrane for waterproof yet breathable performance. The ankles and toecaps are reinforced, and the shin area is thoroughly padded—a sharp rock which hit the boot while I was traveling at excessive highway speeds barely registered.

A small patch of reflective material is sewn into the rear ankle of the boot, and naturally the sole is both oil and gas resistant. Interestingly, BMW chose to include shift toe reinforcement on both right and left boots, which riders of vintage right-side shift machines will certainly appreciate!

Adjustment and fit is controlled via velcro flap and a high-quality YKK zipper running up the inner ankle, respectively. The wide

range of adjustment allows pant legs to be tucked in comfortably if desired. Overall, the boots are very well built, though stiff initially; as the miles add up they gradually yield and become forgiving, though never quite as "house slipper" comfortable as the Sidis were. Yet they do give you a feeling of security and, with all that padding, feel sturdier and more supportive than the Sidis did.

After 30,000 miles, the Allrounds lived up to their name, performing their duties faithfully in all climates and applications. All-season use is no problem, and not a single drop of water has ever leaked inside despite hours in torrential downpours. The stitching and construction is still tight as a drum, though the leather's dyed finish is surprisingly easy to scuff, especially in areas which see heavy abrasion (such as the toes from road debris, and the left heel from repeated kickstand deployment). An occasional treatment of leather conditioner helps renew those areas. The interior material and soles wear like iron, with virtually no physical sign that these boots have traversed the miles they have. About the only suggestion we'd make to BMW is to offer a taller version of the boots, as these stand approximately 11.5" high, or 1.5" shorter than the aforementioned Sidis. The extra shin protection would be much appreciated. As is, however, they're easily a standout bargain in the mid-priced boot class.



BMW Allround Boots, \$235—www.bmw-riders-gear.com