

## Victory for 2012

by Dave Searle



2012 Victory Cross Country Tour

**A**T ITS 2012 new model launch, held in Park City, Utah, Victory was happy to share its latest numbers: Sales are up 24% in the US and 59% internationally. And in its market segment, Victory says it has climbed from fifth overall to second place, behind only Harley-Davidson.

Although the ink on the deal had barely dried, Polaris' acquisition of Indian Motorcycles of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, added even more excitement. Victory reps informed us the company had long been interested in purchasing Indian, and even considered buying the name when Polaris first began motorcycle production back in 1998. It plans to make Indian a stand-alone second brand, with its own designers, executive staff, and even dealerships. In terms of model differentiation, Indian will embody the "classic" style and Victory will continue to express more modern interpretations. Polaris has also committed to moving Indian production to Iowa and continuing to build the existing Indian Chief alongside the Victories at its Spirit Lake assembly lines, examples of which should be available in late fall at much more competitive prices than its recent offerings. At the same time, it will move forward aggressively to develop an all-new machine together with an all-new motor, which will likely take at least two years before appearing in production form.

While Indian's future makes for interesting speculation, Victory's 2012 models are here now, and the Cross Country Tour is the latest addition to the line-up. To demonstrate its talent for long-distance travel, new CC Tours were provided to a group of motojournalists for a company sponsored ride to Sturgis, where they would become part of Victory's demo ride fleet at the huge South Dakota event. A brief first impression is on the next page.

### Touring Victories

An upgrade of the Cross Country model that won our three-way "Batwing Bagger" comparison in December 2010, the new Cross Country Tour is equipped with a fully featured sound system including rear seat speakers. An AM/FM radio and iPod hookups are standard, and satellite radio and GPS are options. It carries a very large, quickly detachable top trunk incorporating a passenger backrest in addition to large removable saddlebags. Its windshield is 8" taller than the stubby unit on our 2010 Cross Country and it carries a new ventilation arrangement dubbed the "Comfort Control System:" clear moveable deflectors on the base of the head fairing as well as boxy new fairing lowers that incorporate large glove compartments at the top and vertical air louvers below to either shut off or redirect air into the passenger compartment.

Like the Cross Country, the new CC Tour includes built-in protection bars both in the fairing lowers and beneath the saddlebags to limit damage in a tip-over and to offer rider protection in a mishap. To maximize comfort on long hauls, cruise control, heated seats and grips, adjustable passenger floorboards, HID lighting, three power outlets and ABS are also standard. The CC Tour's luggage volume is claimed to be best-in-class, larger even than the 2012 Gold Wing's at 41 gal. total capacity to the Wing's 40 gal. Powered like all members of the Victory family for 2012 by the SOHC, four-valve, Freedom 106/6 (106 cubic inches, six-speed transmission), the Tour's motor is tuned to produce 109 lb.-ft. of torque. The Cross Country Tour has a base price of \$21,999.

The highly styled Victory Vision returns for 2012, but seems to have been eclipsed as the top of the line by the new CC Tour. In addition to its distinctive bodywork with a fixed fairing and adjustable windshield, its top trunk and swoopy side bags offer 29 gals. of storage. The sound system includes a weather radio as standard, and it's pre-wired to accept a CB radio and helmet communicator systems. Cruise control and ABS are also standard at the machine's MSRP of \$20,999. The Vision 8-Ball model has been discontinued.

The Cross Country also returns for 2012, priced at \$18,999. ABS is now standard across all Victory's touring models.

The final members of the touring family are the Cross Roads and Cross Roads LE models. These forego the use of head fairings and can be equipped with either "soft" leather saddlebags with semi-rigid liners or the same lockable hard bags that are standard on the Cross Country. Cruise control and ABS are standard on both. The Cross Roads is \$15,999, and the LE gets two-tone paint, wire wheels, a windshield, light bar, special fender trim and protection bars for \$17,999.

### Cruisers

The blacked-out, ape-hangered, white-wall-tired High Ball bobber, introduced in January 2011, has proven very popular at \$13,499 and is now the company's second best-selling model. Its minimalist vibe is reinforced by a solo seat and single instrument clock that incorporates both a speedo and tach. Its bodywork is based on the Vegas, with the same raised "spine" highlight running down the center of its gastank and rear fender, which also features a Frenched-in taillight. Its mitered multi-piece ape-hangers can be run either up or sweptback for legality in those locales that don't sanction high handlebars. Powered by a Stage-2 106/6 motor that makes 113 lb.-ft. of torque and rolling on fat 16" wheels, it has the muscle to back-up its bad-boy attitude.

The Vegas is back, too, in either Imperial Blue over Pearl or Sunset Red over Pearl paint, wearing a 21" front wheel for the traditional chopper look. The Vegas Jackpot is the custom variation, using a fat 250mm rear tire and high-end paint job.

The Kingpin is the "classic" styled cruiser, with sweeping fender profiles and floorboards for the rider. Easily accessorized for touring, the \$14,999 Kingpin adds versatility to the line.

Last but not least, the Hammer S provides the essential muscle cruiser experience with its giant 250mm rear tire and sleek fast-back rear fender, rolling on 10-spoke alloy wheels supported by an inverted cartridge fork up front for \$18,499.

The Victory 8-Balls; the Vegas and the Hammer, are blacked-out versions of their respective models with stealth-fighter bodywork, exhaust systems, engines, headlights, handlebars, wheels, frames, sidestands, etc. Value-priced, the Hammer 8-Ball is \$14,499, a whopping \$4000 cheaper than the S-model.

As always, the Ness Signature models are the fully factory customized editions. Customized by the maestro himself, Arlen Ness, his son Cory, and now Cory's son Zach, these dazzling machines are detailed with a wide variety of special chrome and billet parts, exotic custom paint jobs, fancy leather seats as well as high-end Kicker premium audio speakers to set them apart from the crowd. Limited-editions, numbered and signed by their creators, the special models include the Arlen Ness Vision, the Cory Ness Cross Country, and the Zach Ness Vegas 8-Ball.

The CORE Custom program is also carried over for 2012, allowing buyers to choose as many as 48 individual paint and accessory variations without wasting money replacing stock parts. The new fairing lowers that are part of the Cross Country Tour are also available for retrofit and are even available in matching paint jobs to fit last year's Cross Country machines. Exhaust systems that are CARB certified and meet the SAE J2825 standard are also offered, although this sound standard has not yet been officially adopted nationwide as was hoped. And the CC Tour's HID headlight system is also offered as an upgrade.

To show Victory's appreciation for their service, active duty military personnel are given a discount of \$1000 on new motorcycle purchases.

### **Cross Country Tour 1st Impression**

Our route from Park City, Utah, to Sturgis, South Dakota, was planned to include a minimum of interstates and a maximum of scenic backroads, with overnight stops in Greenwood Springs, Colorado, and Cheyenne, Wyoming, along the way. The traditionally warm summer weather had recently been punctuated by a series of strong weather fronts, so thunderstorms were a distinct possibility, but we were lucky not to need the rain gear we carried.

The Cross Country Tour proved to be very accommodating. Its voluminous luggage capacity swallowed all the extra gear we brought along for changeable weather conditions and still had room for more. The top trunk is particularly large, plenty big enough for two full face helmets, but even when fully loaded, didn't seem to hurt maneuverability or stability in cross-winds. The side bags, which lock and unlock like the trunk with the ignition key, are also very generously sized and Victory provided us with its very nice fitted bag liners to ease the job of lugging things into hotels and repacking. If the greatest luggage capacity in any production touring bike isn't enough for you, you're probably carrying more than you really need.

With three long days to ride before reaching our goal, the CC Tour's cockpit comfort would certainly be well tested. The verdict: We could have easily done three more without suffering in the least. The rider's seat is very supportive, the handlebars comfortably positioned and your boots rest on tapering floorboards for a variety of leg-stretching options. And better yet, the floorboards don't compromise the machine's cornering clearance; it's still excellent, offering a reported 32° of lean angle in either direction. One real advantage the Victory has over its H-D competition is its comparatively nimble handling, which was certainly highlighted on the very tight and winding Iron Mountain Road from Custer State Park to the base of Mount Rushmore—a veritable conga line of Milwaukee product. Not only is the CC

Tour's steering low in effort, but its front end also gives excellent traction feel, a comparatively rare sensation that does so much to reassure a rider that spirited cornering speeds are safe. As a result of its excellent geometry choices, a stiff responsive aluminum chassis and excellent suspension tuning, the CC Tour handles more like a sport-tourer than a typical touring cruiser. It doesn't crash over bumps and it doesn't float or feel disconnected either, it just stays in the middle of its 4.72" of travel at each end, keeping the chassis stable and the steering poised.

The Cross Country Tour's new much-taller windshield means that you must look through rather than over the screen. And if it weren't so optically perfect, this wouldn't have been nearly so desirable. As it is, you find that the windblast is raised above the top of even a taller rider's helmet and the shield's smooth curvature eliminates helmet buffeting almost entirely, for a very relaxing riding environment.

The trick wind-control features—the little winglets that direct air from the bottom of the head fairing, and the long vertical louvers in the lowers—allow generous cooling air into the cockpit without also channeling too much engine heat. For an essentially air-cooled motor, and even in our hottest mid-90° temps, the Victory CC Tour was never uncomfortably warm and the rider's ventilation was excellent.

In some parts of the country, a 5.8-gal. fuel capacity might seem like overkill, but not in the wide-open spaces we traversed. Several times, the bike's reserve fuel light lit

(at around 165 miles) when the nearest town and gas station were still something like 45 miles away. Especially when riding alone, this could create some unease, but we never ran out of fuel. We were told the reserve is about 1.1 gal., and our gas mileage ranged from 33.2–40.6 mpg, averaging 37.5 mpg overall.

The CC Tour's braking power is also very good; controllable and strong. And because the Victory's ABS uses the conventional, large diameter pulse rings for rotational information, company reps claimed it was more effective than H-D's design, which uses the wheel bearings for far fewer pulses per revolution. This observation was born-out in our comparison testing of the 2011 Cross Country and H-D FLHX Street Glide; the Harley needed 132.2' to stop from 60 and the Cross Country only 121.9'.

The CC Tour's 1731cc, 50° V-twin was certainly up to the task it was given. It willingly cruised above 80 mph for miles on end, never coughing or missing a beat, its Visteon fuel injection giving both excellent driveability and subtle control when necessary. The overdrive sixth gear makes long stretches less stressful to the motor and its rider, and although we occasionally wished for a bit more low-end grunt for take-offs, the package was hard to fault for its overall capability. Although the transmission was a bit clunkier than some (like the Star Stratoliner's) and often a little reluctant to select first from neutral or complete a speed shift swiftly, the engine's wide torque spread makes shifting less essential than it would be otherwise.

In all, we wished the new Cross Country Tour had been available earlier; it would have been interesting to include in our comparison of the 2012 Gold Wing and new BMW K1600GTL. We suspect it would have done well. It's that good. ■

