

Modular Helmet Update

One of the most popular comparisons we ever ran in MCN was on modular or "flip-face" helmets, back in July of 2001. This, then, is the latest information we have on the updates to the helmets previously tested, plus a few new ones that have come on the market since then. Read the notes carefully though, as this popular segment is rapidly changing, and some of the helmets reported on here are due to be replaced by even newer iterations very soon.

It is important to note that, in so far as we have been able to determine, all of the helmets featured in this comparison fully meet all of the DOT testing criteria, with the possible exception of the Zorn (see Notes). And, you should note that though to consider a motorcycle helmet's system function to be protecting your head, that is not the primary factor in this report.

We do not consider ourselves capable of performing more rigorous or definitive scientific testing of a helmet's protective qualities than the DOT or the Snell Foundation, and therefore cannot fairly assess which of these helmets might provide more protection in a given crash scenario. We can, however, take a hard look at a number of features that are not covered in normal helmet testing, and rate them according to our own testing criteria.

Though these criteria are obviously all secondary to a helmet's primary function of impact absorption and penetration resistance, they become of primary importance when comparing helmets that are, for the most part, fairly equal in other aspects, by normal testing standards.

Testing

Much of the testing for these helmets was subjective, relying on the opinions of sev-

eral professional riders, who rode various routes on various different types of bikes, using each helmet. However, there was also a scientific approach to certain elements.

Prices: Prices listed include manufacturer's suggested retail price, when available, but also list the lowest price we were able to find the helmet selling for after an extensive search of the internet. You may or may not be able to find some of the really low sale prices we found at the time.

Weight: All test helmets were ordered in the same size (XL), and weighed on the same official postal scale.

Vision: Field of vision was measured by locking the helmet into a repeatable, fixed position on a stand bench. Riders inserted their heads in each helmet and were tested with eye charts for their maximum field of forward vision to the left, right, up and down. Data is for comparison purposes only, and may not reflect your own actual field of vision. Scoring was weighted equally for all directions, as side views are important for detecting oncoming hazards, lower vision for reading instruments, and upper vision useful when in a "posture-back" stance.

Comfort: Obviously, comfort is a very personal thing, and in the case of a helmet, can often be based on the shape of the wearer's head. However, there are a number of factors that can contribute to your comfort level with any given helmet, and so those items were some type of helmets we were rating. Is the lining removable and/or washable? (A great fitting helmet can still be uncomfortable if it stinks of ozone, mold and mildew.) Is the interior adjustable for different-shaped heads, with things like removable cheekpads? Is there a front (chin) rest? And so on. How fit it anatomically close to the wearer's chin? Is there a neck roll in the back? How comfortable is the

rest to wind buffeting? Wind noise?

Added Features: Extra points were given for new standard items that could conceivably be of benefit. Things like built-in sun visors on the Schuberth and HJC MX2, or the use of non-reflective material for night visibility. Another important factor, often overlooked, was whether or not the helmet could be removed with the chinbar down. This could be very important in an emergency situation.

Vision: We rated the vision in the "vision" category. Vision was rated by perceived optical quality, ease of replacement, sealing against the shell, variety of locking positions, anti-fog coating included, how "thick" with the shell when closed and cost of replacement.

Chinbars: Chinbars were rated on the ease of use when wearing gloves, the sturdiness of their latching mechanisms, and their profile height when raised.

Retainer: The chinstrap retaining mechanism was looked at for ease of use, comfort of attachment to the shell, right, up and down, and latching system was considered best—at least in the case of quick-disconnect types.

Venting: We looked at the number and size of the vents, and particularly their efficiency in providing anti-fogging for the inside of the shell. Also noted was the ease of opening and/or locking the vents with gloves on, with the helmet on your head.

Obviously, much of this rating system is subjective—personal opinions, if you will—so we tried to get as many different opinions as possible, not only from our testers, but from people who owned and rode regularly with these same type of helmets we were rating. Just as obviously, the helmet that is most right for one person may be the most wrong on another. The best you can do is try to make an informed decision for yourself, based on the most information you can possibly get. And that's the purpose of this article: to simply try to add to your own knowledge base, and aid in your decision-making. ☺

\$259.95 - \$192.99

Total Score: 34.0

Comfort Venting **★★★★** **★★★★** Chinbar Retainer **★★★★** Vision/Vision Weight **★★★★** Features Value **★★★★**

Weight: 3 lbs., 8.5 oz. **Replacement shield:** \$22.85-(\$49.95)
Notes: **GE Lanza shell:** Three years ago, the Nolan W100 earned our "Best Buy" rating, and the newer "X" version is an improvement on that model. It's the lightest-weight of all the modulars we've ever tested, and a new "smart fit" system allows releasing the chinbar with one hand. The lining is removable and washable, and treated with an anti-microbial agent to prevent mold. Field of vision is the widest of all models tested, and it is one of only two modulars that can be easily removed from the head with the chinbar in place. Chinbar latches are steel-rod and automatically retract (and) flip up and down. The chinbar latching system is a precaution, as it can be unlatched without carrying the weight back on your head. The quick-disconnect strap retainers adjust easily into six different positions, and the facefield seals securely and is easily replaced without tools. Venting is good, but the top vents are difficult to operate with gloves on. Also, the retaining strap on the removable lining would sometimes come loose when removing the helmet. **CRMA International:** (833) 671-6716; www.nolan.it



HJC SY-MAX Total Score: 33.0 \$244.99 - \$188.99

Comfort Venting **★★★★** **★★★★** Chinbar Retainer **★★★★** Vision/Vision Weight **★★★★** Features Value **★★★★**

Weight: 3 lbs., 9.3 oz. **Replacement shield:** \$19.95-(\$19.95)
Notes: **Fiberglass shell:** HJC's SY-MAX offers a removable and washable Dupont CoolMax lining, and probably the best quick-release, no-tools facefield replacement system of the group. The chinbar operating system—a long button on the inside with one hand—is the easiest to operate of all the modulars. Interestingly, the latching mechanisms are plastic catches, and though they seem to be the strongest of all the plastic latches we tested, we still prefer to see steel construction in this critical area. The SY-MAX was the only modular besides the Nolan that could be easily removed with the chinbar in place, and also scored highly for noise abatement and general comfort level. The field of vision was superior to all the others at the top and bottom, but below average to the sides. Facefield sealing and optical quality were excellent, and venting is good. Subjective comfort level reported by test riders was the highest in the group. The chinstrap is retained with D-rings, but they are machined to a much higher quality than normal D-rings. **HJC America:** (800) 487-1100; www.hjchelmets.com

RECOMMENDED



Jarow Mono X2 Total Score: 31.5 \$325.00 - \$289.00

Comfort Venting **★★★★** **★★★★** Chinbar Retainer **★★★★** Vision/Vision Weight **★★★★** Features Value **★★★★**

Weight: 4 lbs., 1.4 oz. **Replacement shield:** \$38.95
Notes: **Polycarbonate shell:** Distributed by Protec D, the Italian Jarow line has sold previously as the "Aero" and the "Sector." The Mono X2 offers a great value for the money, with a CoolMax lining, metal-to-metal CoolMax with removable cheekpads available in thick or thin to fit your face. The facefield seals exceptionally well, and the unique shape of the face opening gives good side vision and the best lower vision of the group, but restricted top vision. Facefield removal requires a screwdriver or coin. The chinbar latching mechanism is metal-to-metal, seems very strong, and operates easily with a single release button. The large top vent and smaller chin vent open easily with gloved hands. Jarow has copied Schuberth with a built-in, retractable sun visor, though theirs is actually larger and better-shaped, ergonomically. Aerodynamics and noise abatement are both above average, and we have to mention that the first two shells were noticeably excellent. The only downside we could note to the Mono X2 was its weight—the heaviest of any we've ever tested. **Protec D:** (800) 527-6867; www.slipopen.com

RECOMMENDED



Schuberth Concept Total Score: 30.5 \$399.00

Comfort Venting **★★★★** **★★★★** Chinbar Retainer **★★★★** Vision/Vision Weight **★★★★** Features Value **★★★★**

Weight: 3 lbs., 15.0 oz. **Replacement shield:** \$58.95
Notes: **Carbon-Aramid composite shell:** The Concept is an excellent quality helmet with a myriad of innovative features that would easily earn our top honors if not for its weight (nearly a half-pound heavier than most) and price. It also lost a point for the chinstrap latch, though strong and durable, is sometimes difficult to line up. Among the pluses, though: A removable, washable lining that is available in three different sizes; the strongest, pin-lock shell, chinbar latch of the group (with one-hand operation); a built-in, flip-down sun visor; a medic alert inset container on the outer shell; no-tool facefield systems, with special venting positions on top; and an aerodynamic lip on top that reduces buffeting and lift. Field of vision is second only to the Nolan, but somewhat restricted in the top view. Vents are easy to operate and highly functional. Facefield seal and optical quality are first-rate. The distributor notes that a "new and improved" model will be out soon. Look for it—it could be a real winner if they made it a bit lighter. **Interpart Fashions West:** (714) 258-2122; www.schuberth-usa.com

RECOMMENDED



Shoel Syncrotec Total Score: 29.0 \$465.99 - \$325.99

Comfort Venting **★★★★** **★★★★** Chinbar Retainer **★★★★** Vision/Vision Weight **★★★★** Features Value **★★★★**

Weight: 3 lbs., 9.9 oz. **Replacement shield:** \$28.00-(\$27.00)
Notes: **Reinforced fiberglass shell:** Shoel's Syncrotec model added full slightly over making the cut for a "Recommended" rating, due to its price—the highest of all the modulars tested. Still, we gave it an extra point for value due to its five-year warranty (compared to one year for the others), the one-handed chinbar latching system is a pin-lock shell arrangement, only slightly less heavy than the Schuberth, and the helmet could be removed with the chinbar down, though it was difficult and painful to do so. The facefield is removable without tools, and offers good optical quality, but the field of vision was somewhat restricted at the top, similar excepted at the bottom. Controls for both the top and bottom vents are tiny, and difficult to operate with gloves on. Facefield seal is excellent, and noise abatement is good. The lining, while comfortable, is not removable for cleaning or replacement. Chinstrap retention is normal D-rings, but a clip on the end of the strap is troublesome. **Shoel Safety Helmet Corp.:** (714) 730-0841; www.shoel-helmets.com

RECOMMENDED

