

REVIEW - BUELL ULYSSES XB12X

REVIEW BY WILLIAM MORRIS

Matthew, Max and Riaan from Harley-Davidson Durban have been my first introduction to Buell and the lifestyle surrounding it; you guys make outsiders feel welcomed, thanks.

FIRST IMPRESSION

This big Buell really appealed to me; the thick, flowing frame and gorgeous rims look so different than anything else out there. The tyre-hugging front and rear mudguards are really well constructed and add much to the overall allure. Just seeing the big 1200cc V-twin bouncing around on its rubber engine-mounts as the power-plant warmed up got me excited, here goes my first ride on some real American muscle!

PERFORMANCE

I must admit this was nothing like I expected. The performance is not eye-popping or intense - demanding excessive rider input; it is relaxed and comfortable, almost lazy and hardly any rider input is required. The first thing I noticed as I began my journey was my lack of concentrated focus on the Buell, usually a bike will take a while to get used to, but the Ulysses just seems to know what you want to do and does it without hesitation, allowing your mind to focus on your surroundings and experience the thrill of the open road. The big V has buckets of torque low down offering real-world fun without the need to exceed. It is a dream to wheelie – roll on the power and up it comes, smooth, solid, and absolutely delicious!

HANDLING

On every Buell you will find three similar design principles: Mass Centralization (keeping the weight as centred as possible), Chassis Rigidity, and Low Unsprung Weight (keeping the weight of components not supported by springs or shocks, as light as possible). These three principles, called the "Trilogy of Tech", were developed to enhance the ride and are found on every Buell. Mass Centralization – the signature underbelly exhaust system and the placement of the rear shock are the most obvious contributors. This is also why oil is found in the swingarm and petrol in the frame (which holds almost 17lts). Chassis Rigidity – a highly rigid aluminium wrap-around frame and short wheelbase keep wheels aligned avoiding unwanted corner flex. Low Unsprung Weight – enormous front single disc is mounted on the rim rather than the spindle. When the brake is applied it transfers braking forces directly to the rim instead of through the spokes. Without the need for load-bearing spokes or even a second disc, the bike's front end weighs in about 2 ½ kgs lighter than what you'd find on most dual disc set-ups. Combine these three principles and things just start to make sense. Superb road-holding and handling that allows you to enjoy cornering at any speed, and I don't just mean carving at hyper speed, tight knee-down first and second gear bends put a grin on my face every time! Endos are unbelievably effortless and super smooth; braking is powerful, yet without the harsh bite associated with other effective braking systems. I think this is due firstly to the braking force up front, which is sent directly to the tyre through the rim instead of through the spindle and spokes, and secondly to the lightness of its tail. So lacking was the biting sensation that I was beginning to regard the front brake as spongy – until I noticed the rear tyre hovering half a metre off the ground!

SUSPENSION & COMFORT

A refreshingly rider focused position suited the overall feel of the Ulysses perfectly. I felt relaxed in the comfortable upright position, hands up quite high on the tall, wide handlebars. Seat height at a tiptoed 84cm initiates mental confidence to tackle any obstacle in its path, or perhaps off the path just a little. The Ulysses enjoys a bit of off-road and the fully adjustable Showa's do a fantastic job soaking up all the bumps. "B" grade roads (potholes with the odd bit of tar in between) can be ventured safely and with confidence. Pillion position is well catered for with low pegs, sturdy grab rails and a supportive backrest. Talking of the backrest – this neat little thing can be easily moved into three different positions: upright for the pillion's comfort, dropped backwards to be used as a luggage rack when trekking 2-up, or dropped forward to negate wind resistance when travelling alone.

OVERALL RATING

The ride is the all-important focus in the design of every Buell, and it works! What an enjoyable bike to ride! In Eric Buell's own words, "Because in the end it's not how quickly you get there. It's how much fun you have on the way."

PRICE

R102 000.00 incl. VAT



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