

REVIEW: TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE

REVIEW BY WILLIAM MORRIS

Bike Talk magazine would like to thank Lisa and Ian from East Coast Triumph for providing the Triumph Bonneville, a true classic, for review.

FIRST IMPRESSION

An oxymoron by definition is a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction, for example: Modern Classic or Contemporary Retro. Indeed, the Triumph Bonneville is within itself two seemingly inconsistent ideas paired into one: capturing the styling and soul of a bygone era, yet within its package the performance and appeal to satisfy expectations of today.

CONTROLS AND GADGETS

Details are important. They have ability to sway a motorcycle between the balance of classy or cheap. Consider for a moment a distinguishing touch of elegance – the Triumph logo etched into the polished steel handlebar clamp, clean and stylish... I love it! Four simple light indicators (neutral, oil levels, brights and flickers) are placed to the lower right of an analogue speedo (no tachometer) that has a "café racer" appeal to it. Overall, the dash is uncomplicated and nicely finished.



PERFORMANCE

Transmission is admirable; the clutch is light and smooth and the five-speed gearbox is slick and positive, although it goes home with a bit of a clunk in first. The 865cc parallel twin is such a lovely engine to drive - spirited and smooth, pulling with authority from just above idle. The strong mid-range gives way to a thrumming top end with some restrained buzzing through the bars and footpegs above 135km/h. Hunched over the tank the Bonneville will go up to the rev-limiter at 182km/h in top gear in a remarkably short distance and it seems content to buzz along a 150km/h all day. Although the subject of some purist criticism, I found the quiet exhaust tone refreshing in a relaxing sort of way, adding to the character of a bike that turned out to be both more capable and less bland than I expected.

SUSPENSION, HANDLING & COMFORT

Chunky handlebars felt and looked the part, as did the conventional twin coil-spring rear suspension which provided surprisingly stiff compression for superb cornering. The Bonneville has excellent road manners and agility, and although the solidly built Bonnie is no lightweight, its makers have ensured quick, responsive handling "Buell style" by concentrating the major masses centrally and low down. The Bonneville's road holding, handling and stopping ability is crisp, composed and confidence inspiring. Even well tucked in footpegs positioned for maximum cornering clearance are ground out around the first real bend as the chassis's ability becomes apparent. Braking has benefited from today's technology with twin piston calipers grasping a single 310mm front disc and a 255mm rear that together provide ample stopping power to cope with the Bonneville's 49.2kW and 205kg body mass; the stiff, short-travel suspension lets you use all of it to good effect.

OVERALL RATING

The Bonneville is a genuine retro built by a firm that has among the best credentials in the business, a firm that I believe has succeeded in matching classic British style to 21st century technology. Riding an R1, Blade, or Ninja is a more serious business. But the Bonnie is for fun - a lot of it.

PRICE

Std. R69 995.00 Including VAT

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