

IMP RESULTS COVER SHEET



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| Media name(s) | Rishad Saam Mehta |
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| Relative to Interactive Traveller? | Yes |
| Contents of Article/Programme (translation) | The writer passionately describes his riding experience through Queenstown on a 1450 cc Harley Davidson. Cruising through windy, mountain roads was both a pleasurable and liberating experience for the author, who is used to less powerful bike in his home country. |
| Regions Covered | Queenstown, Cromwell, Glenorchy |
| Operators Mentioned | Activities: Harley Davidson Road King Classic |
| Event Attended | N/A |
| Airline Sponsor | Air New Zealand |

Metro Plus (The Hindu)

nRiding into the sunset

Date: 21-07-2008 | Edition: Chennai | Page: 2 | Source: Bureau | Clip size (cm): W: 32 H: 20

Clip: 1 of 2

“You see this Harley is very agricultural” said Graham Beker, who was going to take me riding that day. That was my introduction to the Harley-Davidson Road King Classic that was to be mine for a crisp winter day around Queenstown in New Zealand. “Bloody hell” I thought, “if Graham was calling this shimmering vision of highly polished chrome and brushed aluminium, agricultural, what would he have to say about my trusty old Enfield Bullet back home in Mumbai.

When I told him that I ride a 350cc motorcycle back home and was a little nervous about this 1450cc beast, he told me he’d lead and, most importantly, adjust his speed to suit mine.

The Harley is a leisurely cruiser, more at peace on long open roads, but today, I’d be riding it on roads more suited for a nimble sports bike and I would have to coax the Harley around corners and Graham threw in a few pointers on how to handle this 2380mm long cruiser on the twisty mountain roads that we were going to ride.

Cruiser’s delight

The Harley, he explained, is a motorcycle that is at its sweetest while cruising. In short, it would behave like a cumbersome old bull during ‘U’ turns and that is where I was most likely to drop the 336kg bike.

The rental agreement I’d signed included a bond making me liable for damage up to 2000 NZ dollars, which meant Rs. 60,000, and I’d seared this figure into my brain. And dropping this bike wasn’t like the Enfield where the generous crash guard would take the blow. With all its articulate mirrors, footboards and whorls of chrome, dropping the Harley, even at standstill, would be a very costly affair.

Graham’s agricultural parallel made absolute sense the minute I depressed the starter button



Riding into the sunset

ROUND AND ABOUT RISHAD SAAM MEHTA is all smitten after taking a ride on the Harley Davidson Road King Classic

COMMUNE WITH NATURE On a mean machine PHOTO: RISHAD SAAM MEHTA

and the 1450cc fuel injected engine came alive – the whole motorcycle started shaking like a living thing.

And the sound...it brought visions of the rice fields of Punjab because it actually sounded so much like a refined tractor. Graham started off on his yellow Buell and I followed. Hardly had we done five km and I realised what it was about a Harley and riding into the sunset and all the

travel mysticism that seems to be ingrained into the DNA of this motorcycle brand. Everything about this bike was big; my size 11 shoes fit comfortably on the footboards, the tank mounted speedo displayed figures in a large bold font and the switch gear on the handlebars wasn’t clustered together like caviar.

The Cromwell to Queenstown road is initially straight and morning traffic was light. My

mind went back to a ride on my Bullet from Sonamarg to Srinagar when I’d noticed that the Enfield was at peace with itself at 60kph, engine turning over in harmony, riding past golden mustard fields.

Déjà vu happened with the Harley, only difference being that the speedo needle was at 120 and the Harley was as unperturbed as a meditating monk.

Then we hit the twisties that

are the second half of the road to Queenstown. Now the monk turned into a stubborn mule.

At the first corner I went around she leaned over like the Posiedon, but luckily it was a wide corner so I had some run off area to get it together again. Ahead of me Graham was symphony in motion on his Buell, fluidly taking one bend after another.

We stopped at a little café on

the outskirts of Queenstown and over some quiche and coffee Graham told me that I should keep the throttle constant around a corner, get my entry speed right and then stay at that all through the corner.

I had plenty of corners coming up to put his advice into practice on the road to Glenorchy. This little village that lies at the head of Lake Wakatipu is a very scenic ride from Queen-

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Clip: 2 of 2

stown along the lake and over small hillocks.

By this time the sun was strong and had evaporated the last of the moisture from the roads, the tar was smooth, but most of all it was a fabulously scenic road.

Lethargic 'S' bends were hardly a bother, a left-right (or vice-versa) lean and the bike would go through sweetly. The fight was at the tight hairpins, Graham and his Buell would go through gracefully like a Spitfire in a dogfight and I would follow cumbersomely like a Lancaster Bomber.

The Indian genes

Graham would have nervous moments when I'd notice a good spot, stop and do a quick U turn in the middle of the road to go back and get a picture. But I explained that I was Indian and taking impromptu 'U' turns at a whim, on an incline and/or a narrow road was hardwired onto my genetic circuit board.

We rode 200km around Queenstown, which is but a fraction of what you can do in a day on the Harley that is made to explore continents. Nevertheless, it was my first proper big bike ride and it instilled confidence. Very soon I'm going to ride a Harley the way it's meant to be ridden. Towards the horizon!