

IMP RESULTS COVER SHEET



Media name(s)	Rishad Saam Mehta
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Circulation / Audience	<p>Circulation: 9,50,000</p> <p>Mumbai Mirror is a popular tabloid in Mumbai, from the Times of India Group stable. It is circulated daily with India's leading English daily - The Times of India – and covers lifestyle, entertainment, politics, sports, news, etc from across the city.</p> <p>The paper has a concentrated travel column, that appears every Sunday. It covers experiences by various travel writers and provides important information on destinations across the globe.</p>
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

Mumbai Mirror

On the twisty tar

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Travel
Going off track



Those who go off the beaten track, write for us.

You see, this Harley is very agricultural." Graham Beker was going to take me riding that day and was now giving me a talk about the Harley's traits.

And, 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? But then I worked out that it was all relative. His idea about agricultural would probably mean a fully loaded tractor whereas I was thinking about a plough and a bullock with ribbons tied on its horns.

Rs 60,000 for a dent!

When I told him that I ride a 350cc motorcycle back home and was a little nervous about this 1450cc beast he reassured me, "You clip at what you're comfortable at - I do this for a living and can ride at 250 kph or 50 kph all day."

As I kitted up, Graham took me through the guiding procedure. The Harley is a leisurely cruiser, more at peace on long open roads, aiming towards the horizon and all that kind of stuff. 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 2380 mm long cruiser on the twisty mountain roads that we were going to ride.

The Harley, he explained, is a motorcycle that is at its sweetest while cruising. It gets crabby at slow speeds and then the front and the rear of the bikes seem to have an agenda of their own. In short it would behave like a cumbersome old bull during U-turns and that is where I was most likely to drop the 336 kg bike.

But I already had a preventive measure for that. 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.

'Potato-potato'

Graham's agricultural parallel made absolute sense the minute I depressed the starter button and the 1450 cc 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. And through the exhaust came that famous 'potato-potato' beat that characterises the Harley's exhaust burble.

On the twisty tar

Rishad Saam Mehta saw Queenstown on a motorbike, so to speak. He recounts his experience

“ This is a motorcycle you point in a direction and ride, and turn around only when you want to start back. But I explained to Graham that I was Indian and taking impromptu U-turns at a whim was wired onto my genetic circuit board

try speed right and then stay at that all through the corner. Lift off the throttle and she would start leaning over.

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 Queenstown 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. To say that these were roads suited for the Harley wouldn't be gospel truth, but I wasn't complaining. 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



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On the twisty tar

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Graham started off on his yellow Buell and I followed.

Hardly had we done five kilometres than 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. The noisy engine and the notchy gear shifts notwithstanding, this bike was pure joy once on the move. Vibrations faded away, the engine became almost melodious and the white walled tyres were soon munching miles at a 100 kph.

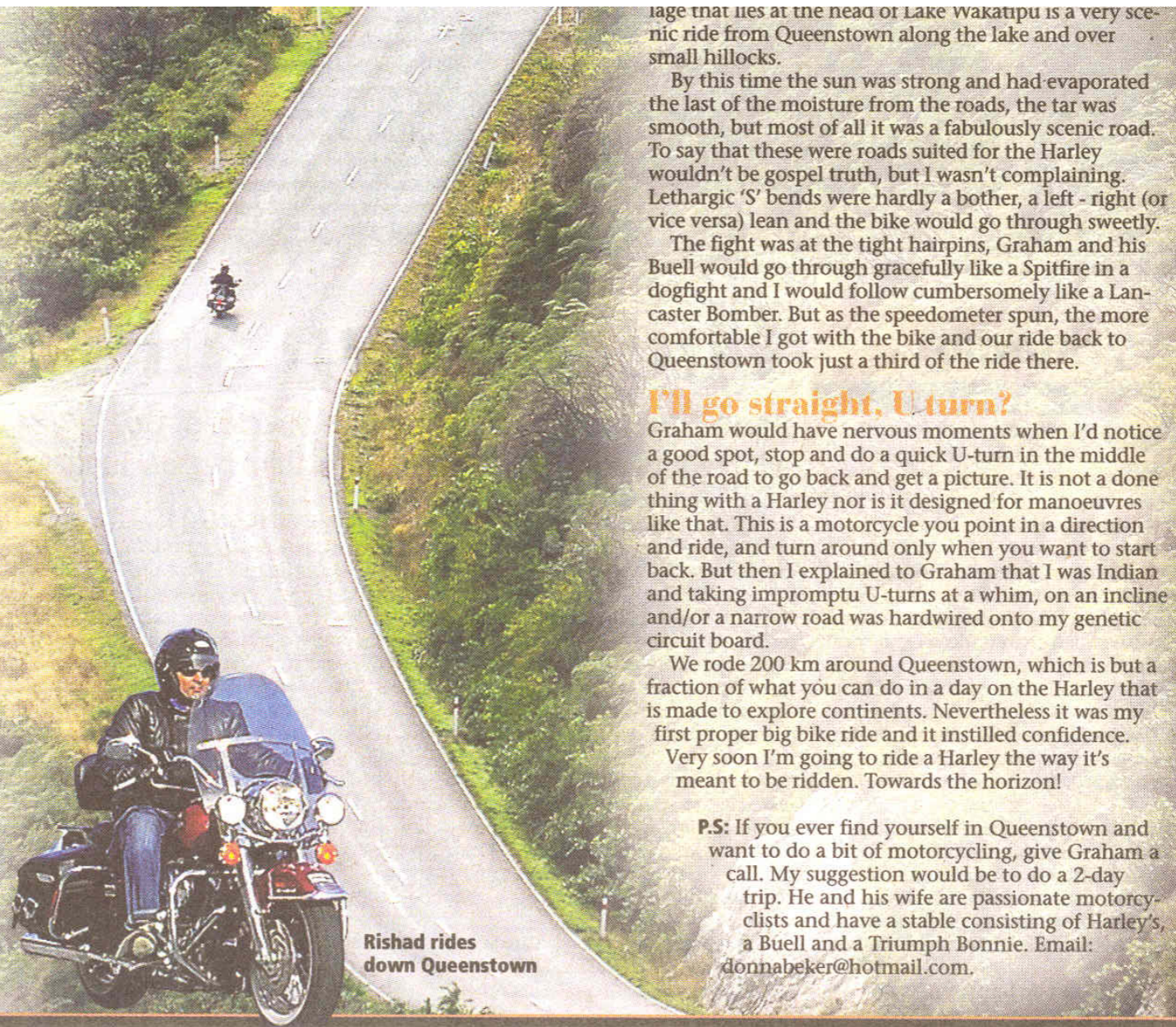
Everything about this bike was big, my size 11 shoes fit comfortably on the footboards, the tank mounted speedometer displayed figures in a large bold font and the switch gear on the handlebars wasn't clustered together like caviar.

Twisties, turns and hairpins

The Cromwell to Queenstown road is initially straight and morning traffic was light so I tried the throttle response. There was no load whiplash acceleration like a karate kid breaking a tile with a blood curdling yell and a sharp blow - rather it was a gentle force pushing up the speed much like a fat boy who would break the same tile by simply putting his weight on it. At 120 kph, 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 Poseidon, but luckily it was a wide corner so I had some run off area to get it together again.

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 en-



Rishad rides down Queenstown

age that lies at the head of Lake Wakatipu is a very scenic ride from Queenstown along the lake and over small hillocks.

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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 clumsily like a Lancaster Bomber. But as the speedometer spun, the more comfortable I got with the bike and our ride back to Queenstown took just a third of the ride there.

I'll go straight, U turn?

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. It is not a done thing with a Harley nor is it designed for manoeuvres like that. This is a motorcycle you point in a direction and ride, and turn around only when you want to start back. But then I explained to Graham 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 200 km 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!

P.S: If you ever find yourself in Queenstown and want to do a bit of motorcycling, give Graham a call. My suggestion would be to do a 2-day trip. He and his wife are passionate motorcyclists and have a stable consisting of Harley's, a Buell and a Triumph Bonnie. Email: donnabaker@hotmail.com.